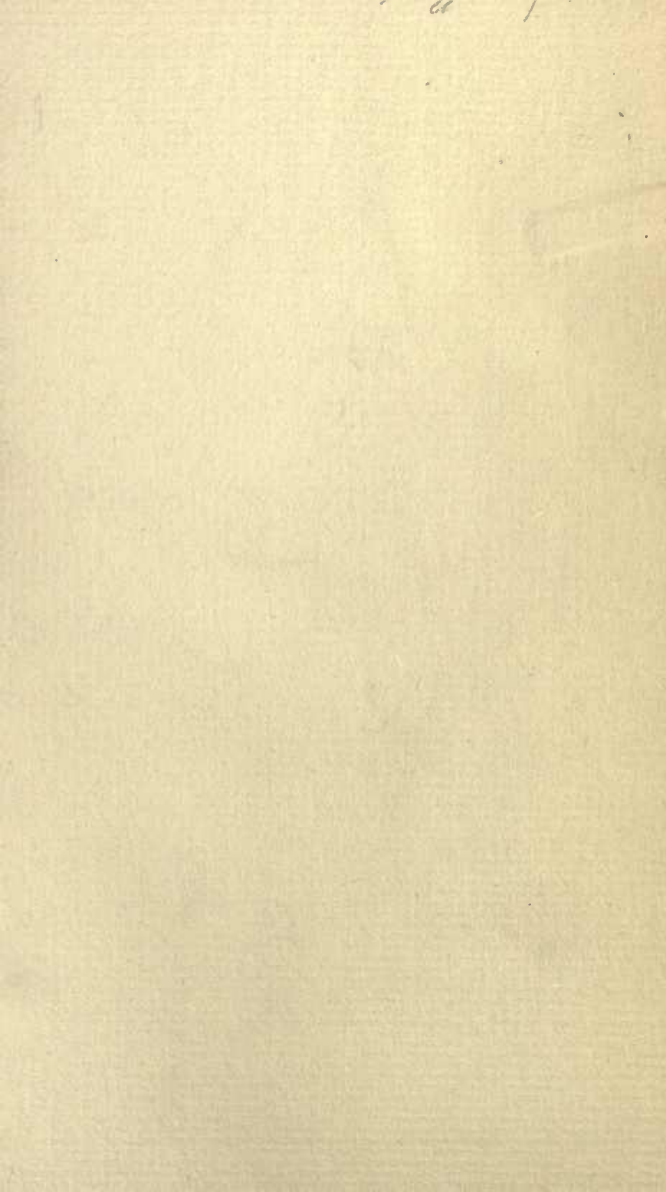


BONNIE MACKIRBY



LAVRA DAYTON FESSENDEN



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An International Episode

BY

LAURA DAYTON FESSENDEN,

AUTHOR OF

"A COLONIAL DAME," "A PURITAN LOVER," ETC.

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To my little daughters, ALICE and DOROTHY, who have listened with such *loving interest* to this story as it came to me bit by bit from the world of fancy, I dedicate my work. May they, as they grow out of childhood and into womanhood, cultivate the constant companionship of *Mercy*, the crown jewel of womanhood as well as of nations.

LAURA DAYTON FESSENDEN,

"HAPPIEGOLUCKIE,"

February 16, 1898.

Highland Park, Illinois.

BONNIE MACKIRBY.

CHAPTER I.

“ My Bonnie lies over the ocean,
My Bonnie lies over the sea,
My Bonnie lies over the ocean,
Oh, bring back my Bonnie to me,”

Sang Mr. Talbot Germond, as he stood beside the window of his smoking-room, looking out into the winter's dusk, a dusk pregnant with a storm of snow, whose birth hour was close at hand.

“I say,” he remarked, turning as he spoke to address himself to a man who was leaning against the mantel-shelf, and barely out of reach of the scorch of the real log fire burning brightly on the polished brass andirons. “What do you think of her

marriage, anyway? She was a sweet, pretty, gentle little girl, and no mistake! And I for one can't help wishing that the bridegroom had been twenty odd years younger, the nuptial day May instead of December, and the sky bright rather than threatening."

The other man laughed a trifle bitterly (too bitterly for a perfectly disinterested critic). "Mere vagaries of a distorted fancy, old boy," he said; "sure evidence of a fit of indigestion! Too much champagne and paté de foie gras at the wedding breakfast! That is all! A good sleep to-night, and a brandy and soda cocktail in the waking moments of to-morrow morning, and you will be able to see that Bonnie's mother was wise when she made an English alliance for her daughter. What does it matter that the duffer the girl has just been tied to is fifty, and shows his years? What does it matter if, during his somewhat protracted bachelor existence, he has been pleased to live in open defiance of moral decency? He has, I grant you, the manners of a hog and all the qualifications of a fully-fledged boor; but, then, he belongs, we are told, to the

"English upper class," and that assurance in itself, even when the foundation for the assertion is a trifle obscure, seems to blind the eyes of American parvenus, not only to a multitude, but to the whole category of written and unwritten sins.

"You are to always bear in mind, my dear fellow, that Mr. Mackirby's grandfather on his mother's side was a brewer! Brewers, you know, are something set apart in England! They are not 'in trade' to begin with! Anything that combines vats and hops gives entrée into the most exalted strata of Albion's rank and fashion. And should any particular brewer's ale, porter or beer please the royal palate or agree with the royal stomach, why a coronet is not unlikely to be the reward."

"But this Mackirby is not a brewer. He is in trade, personally and individually. He haggles and shouts, with all the rest of us, on 'Change.'"

"Well, what of that? If dukes' younger sons no longer decline positions of emolument in big mercantile houses, a baronet's grandson may safely venture. And what's the matter with cotton? Cotton is all right,

and it's cleaner than either pork or crude oil to handle, you know. But come and look out! See, there they go! How like a child she looks, to be sure!"

"Yes, I agree with you! Beauty and the Beast is a fitting and appropriate title, although Madame Méré calls it playfully 'Una and her Lion!' God grant that Madame may have no remorseful nights and bitterly repentant days. How they are showering the rice! Mackirby is everlastingly having a time of it to look pleasant and keep from swearing (rice stings!). They are in the carriage. They are off! Not a shoe has hit its mark! Listen how the wind is moaning!"

"Well, Talbot, pull down the shade, draw the curtains, and light up. That girl's life history has closed, so far as we are concerned. Let's take cigars and talk about the horse show, or the dog show, or something that is yet to be."

Talbot Germond drew one end of his mustache slowly through his fingers, as he said, reflectively: "Rand, did you ever, in your happy-go-lucky life, feel as you have looked upon some one a sense of forebodement? A

sort of conviction that their part in the play was to be tragic? Well, whether you have or not, I tell you, and I want you to remember what I say, that the little girl whose mother has to-day sold her (from God knows what insane motive) has a dark path ahead of her!"

Rand laughed. "The fact of the matter is, Talbot," he said, "that we were, my lad, both very fond of Bonnie. Her sweet, pure soul appealed to our better natures; she was the girl that made us think oftenest of our mothers; her influence made us go home and write to our sisters. Did you ever think of Bonnie as a rich girl? I never did, in spite of her poor Anglomaniac of a mother. "Bonnie was a lady by the right of both birth and breeding; her money was always in abeyance; it had nothing to do with her; it never presented itself in any act of her life, in any outward expression; her personal adornment was distinctive and harmonious, but it gave evidence of neither display nor extravagance; and that great underbred fellow can no more appreciate her delicacy or daintiness than he could enjoy the color of a rose or the subtle fra-

grance of a violet. He got access to her bank account, he found out the actual value of her stocks and bonds; he acquainted himself with the number of pieces of property that she held title to, and then he talked up his English aristocracy with her mother!"

"It is little more than a year," said Germond, "since Bonnie used to go by here every morning on her way to school, her books under her arm, her child voice (a sweet, clear treble) trying to make itself heard through the babble and chatter of her girl companions, as they made merry over innocent nothings."

There was a silence, and then Rand said: "Bonnie comes of a long line of honorable men; her ancestors on her father's side were gentlemen of birth and station. They came from England in the early Colonial days to hold positions of trust in church and state. They were men who learned to love New England so well that they never returned to the Old World, and in time their sons' sons fought a brave fight for liberty, and their names and deeds are written upon the list that records the patriots of the American Revolution. So, whatever Bonnie may

suffer, whatever her awakening may be, be sure that she will do her duty bravely, be sure that she will be a faithful wife and a loving mother."

CHAPTER II.

Charnley Street West was one of the most desirable residence quarters in all the great city of Ploverlie; to live in Charnley Street one must have money, money to deck its excrescences called "residences" with furnishings of lace and velvet, rare woods and massive silver, exquisite china, and accredited works of art, gorgeous footmen and bishop-like butlers, fine horses and garish equipages—money for lavish displays of hot-house flowers and fruits, for fabulously expensive wines, and a constant succession of dinners, teas, receptions and routs during the conventional season; money wherewith (at a given signal from the social autocrat) to swathe all the gorgeous furniture in Holland; swathe the pictures and bank the plate, and then hie away to some country-house or shooting-box.

At No. 61 Charnley Street West lived Mr. and Mrs. William Harcourt Wiggins Mackirby. Everybody, it was said, knew the

Mackirbys or wanted to know them, because Mr. Mackirby was "in" with the best set. William Mackirby was grandson to dear old Sir William Wiggins, who did make the most delightful stout, you know. It was a dead pity that William Mackirby had married an American; but then the dear man had been a business failure, and he needed a lift. It was also supposed at one time that he was rather rapid—too fond of cards and betting at races, and (bend your ear, and let me whisper), but then boys will be boys, you know. Besides this William Mackirby had younger brothers, and so the American wife's money had been very useful—very useful, indeed.

It was, of course (the marriage, don't you know) a great trial to dear Madame Mackirby, but she bore it beautifully, and had even put herself out to receive once or twice with young Mrs. Mackirby, who was wofully wanting, don't you know, in appreciation, young Mrs. Mackirby being so awfully American, don't you know."

The Mackirbys had been married, when our story opens, ten years.

Three times upon Bonnie Mackirby's

breast had been laid a little head, over which she had showered words of mother welcome and tears of joy. And in those quiet hours she had asked God to give back to her some remnant of faith in the father of her children. She did not ask "to love him," but she asked for courage to meet and to pass over in quietness his lack of courtesy, kindness, and many other things that are so necessary to a happy wifehood. She prayed "to be able for her children's sake to believe it was her duty to live on and out a life of self-repression and self-renunciation until the end."

The youngest child was now a little maiden of two, and there was no longer any excuse for Mrs. Mackirby's not participating in the giddy whirl of social events that were crowding and jostling upon each other's heels, and wearing out the souls and bodies of the men and women who were trying to live up to the pace of the hour.

On this particular day of this particular year, Mrs. Mackirby stood before her mirror, making the finishing touches to her afternoon toilette, preparatory to driving to a round of "T's" and "at-homes," when her

maid entered and handed her a note. It was evident that the handwriting was not unknown to Mrs. Mackirby, for a deeper flush came to her cheeks, and there was a perceptible tightening of her red lips, as she drew the paper from the unsealed envelope and read its contents. The maid, meanwhile, stood, white-capped, white-aproned and respectful, watching every movement of her mistress' face.

Mrs. Mackirby read the note over twice, then going to the mantel she took a match, struck it, and twisting first the letter and then the envelope into a curl of paper, let them burn in the grate to a dull gray ash. Then taking the poker, she distributed the ashes until she was assured that not a vestige remained.

Just as this task or whim had been accomplished, Mr. Mackirby made his appearance. He was short-breathed, and was puffing audibly from the effects of climbing the stairs, and his usually white face had a purple flush on it. "Going out?" he managed to gasp. She turned toward him as he spoke; her fine nostrils were dilated, her beautiful dark blue eyes looked straight into

his. "Yes," she answered, quietly. "I had expected to make some visits, but I have changed my plan. I shall spend the afternoon with your mother. I have some things to say to her that it may be for her future interest to hear." His color went and came under her fixed gaze. His sixty years of life furnished him with no reserve of even brute courage wherewith to look into her eyes. So he took refuge in vulgar banter. "You had better put on a little rouge," he said, with a laugh. "You are growing too white for even your fetching style of beauty. American women fade early, but, like many other dried-up things in nature, they hang on, forever and a day. A woman's good-looks and her life should be given their congé together."

For answer, Mrs. Mackirby looked quietly toward the motionless, expressionless maid. "Tell Thomas," she said, "that I shall not want him for this half-hour. I will ring for you if I need you. Close the door." She was at the lock as the maid gained the corridor. She turned the key, then walked back to where her husband was standing, and stood so close to him that her breath fanned his face.

"Do you think," she said, slowly, "that it is an evidence of birth or breeding to speak to a wife as you have just spoken to me before a servant? Do you think, even if you do not love me or cherish me, that I deserve such discourtesy at your hands? Do you not realize what financial comforts I have brought to you, your mother and your brothers?"

"How dare you!" he said, thrusting his face still closer to hers. "How dare you, you young upstart! How dare you! you who offered yourself to me body and soul, say that I am beholden to you for anything?" His last words were less vehement, less threatening. He felt the unmoved steadiness of her gaze, the quiet, fearless dignity of her presence.

"If," she said slowly, as though continuing the speech he had broken in upon, and quite unconscious of his interruption, "if you had remained decently loyal to your obligations of husband and father, I should have considered it best to have continued, for the childrens' sake, the support to your mother, yourself and your brothers. As it is, I shall make it my duty to go to London

and consult with a lawyer whom I know as to the most speedy way of securing a separation from you and obtaining the guardianship of my little girls."

Before she could realize his intention, perhaps before he was conscious in the blind, mad anger of his action, the man, with all the force at his command, had struck the woman standing before him a blow in the face. She neither cried out nor fainted. She showed no evidence of shock or anger. She stood still and looked at him, and he looked with something akin to horror at the white welts his fingers had made.

"May I suggest," he said, at last, in a voice meant to be lightly scornful, "that it would be wise if in the future you reserve your indelicate insinuations for other ears than mine? Remember, I do not permit my mother to be spoken disrespectfully of, even by my wife. As for your threat, it will never be more than that. You are too vain to let the world know that you were weighed in the balance and found wanting. My chastisement has been severe, but it was justly inflicted.

“Arnica is recommended to reduce inflammation and swelling; pray send to the chemist for some if you have not any by you; and now I wish you good-afternoon.” He walked to the door and unlocked it. As he was about to pass out, he added suavely: “Perhaps you would better dilute with one part of water; the crude arnica might be too severe,” and he was gone.

CHAPTER III.

Bonnie Mackirby walked to the long mirror and looked critically at her face. It was beginning to swell and look dark, and she felt a strange stiffness in the muscles. She went to her bureau, and took from one of the drawers a black Spanish lace veil, and proceeded to tie it over her face and bonnet. Then she rang the bell. "Tell Thomas," she said to the proper maid, who appeared before she had taken her fingers from the knob, "to bring the carriage at once."

"It is at the door now, mem."

"So much the better; but, Elizabeth, where are the children?"

"The young ladies are hout with Parks, mem."

"When they come in, tell them that I asked for them, and say that I shall surely be home in time to take tea in the nursery." Then she walked past the prim maid, went down the stairs and out to her carriage.

The footman stood holding the brougham door open. Mrs. Mackirby paused with one foot upon the step. "James," she said, "tell Thomas to drive to the bank in Pancross Street. I shall be detained some time; so you may leave me there and go home."

James touched his hat, saw that all Mrs. Mackirby's skirts were carefully put out of the way of the carriage-door, shut her softly in, gave his orders to Thomas, mounted his seat, folded his arms, and they were off. In due time Mrs. Mackirby reached Pancross Street and entered the bank.

"I wish," she said to an usher, "to see Mr. Prindle. I am Mrs. Mackirby."

"Ah, indeed! Pray step this way, this was Mr. Prindle's room. Mr. Prindle, Mrs. Mackirby."

Mr. Prindle, brisk, dry and varnished (not polished) lost no time in getting out of his high wheel-about, counting-house chair—placid, beaming and effusive he was—saying, "Now, really, what could he have the pleasure of doing for Mrs. Mackirby?" and "Wouldn't Mrs. Mackirby be seated?" "Really, he would be glad if she would."

Mrs. Mackirby "wanted Mr. Prindle to

call her up a messenger;" she "wanted pen, ink and paper—that was all."

These requests were speedily acceded to, the note was written and directed, the messenger dispatched, and then, thanking Mr. Prindle for his courtesy, Mrs. Mackirby left the bank and walked to a chemist's shop, a shop at which she was in the habit of making any medicinal purchases necessary for herself or her household.

To the man who came forward to serve her she said: "I scarcely think you will recognize Mrs. Mackirby through this heavy veil, Mr. Tinker. I am obliged to wear it because I have bruised my face, and I have come in to have you give me the ingredients to form a lotion which my grandmother and my mother both used for whitening the skin. If you will write down the names and quantities as I give them to you, you may send them home for me, as my carriage is not here."

"How," asked Mr. Tinker, looking up from reading over the list of ingredients, "how, may I ask, do you use the fly-paper?"

"Why," said Mrs. Mackirby, "I lay it in a saucer, and pour on about four table-

spoonfuls of water. When the fly-paper has been thoroughly soaked it contains enough arsenic to give the lotion a bleaching effect; the rest of the things, like glycerine and elderflower, soothe and heal."

"Oh, I see," said Mr. Tinker, and he bowed Mrs. Mackirby to the door.

Once outside the chemist's, she took her way to a street somewhat removed from the busy center of trade and traffic, in which there had long been established a quiet, respectable hotel, much frequented by country merchants and progressive farmers and their families. She went through the door of the private entrance and up the stairs, and into the public parlor or reception-room.

A few people were sitting in groups by the windows and near the door. One man was seated at a table, pretending to be interested in a copy of the "Illustrated News." As Mrs. Mackirby entered, he looked up, laid down his paper, rose, and, hat in hand, came toward her. There was no cordiality in his manner, he looked both perplexed and annoyed; but he was evidently too well bred to be anything but formally polite and gracious.

Motioning him to take a chair and seating herself upon another, Mrs. Mackirby lifted her veil.

"I received your note," she said, and I have asked you to meet me here to tell you that every accusation your letter contained against my husband has been known to me for a long time, but until your note came I had always supposed you to be his particular friend, his boon companion; but even believing this, I have never been able to understand for what purpose Mr. Mackirby has brought you so constantly into his private life, has thrust you so insistently upon me, has left you to be my companion through long evenings, has left me dependent upon your escort from theaters and balls; but through it all, you cannot say that any act or word of mine has been disloyal to my vows of wifehood and motherhood. And now has come a time when I decline to endure longer your presence in my home, and I have come to ask you to-day to decline Mr. Mackirby's invitations. This is all, save to request you to return to me now the note written you from the bank."

He took the note from his pocket and handed it to her, with a bow.

"I should," he said, "be greedy indeed if out of my abundance of love-letters from the charming Mrs. Mackirby I refused her this proper little note."

"What do you mean?" she said, leaning toward him, "What do you mean?"

"I mean," he answered, in a voice as cold and calm as hers was hurried, "I mean that your love-letters to me exceed in number those said to have been written by Vanessa to Swift."

She looked about her in a dazed, stupid way, she put one hand to her temple, and then sank back into her chair.

He leaned toward her. "If," he whispered, "you deny me admission to your house, you will wish before many days are over that you had never been born. Your husband is a puppet in my hands. I have been useful to him in procuring a certain drug that it is difficult to purchase, even with much American gold. If you are not more than kind to me, I will gather the letters I have alluded to together and give

them personally into your husband's hands!"

She said no word in reply. She simply rose and left the room and the hotel, and hailing a cab, drove directly home.

CHAPTER IV.

As she drew up at No. 61 Charnley Street, Mrs. Mackirby noticed that a doctor's gig was before the house, and to her question as to who had been taken ill, she was informed by the butler that "the master was very bad" and was "groanin' and takin' on awful."

With all speed Mrs. Mackirby hurried up the stairs, and entered her husband's room. One glance in his face told her how ill he was, and with this knowledge she forgot resentment, forgot her recent encounter, forgot everything but that the father of her children was sick and suffering. She had taken off her bonnet, and she was conscious that the strange doctor—who lived near by, and whom the servants had called in as the nearest practitioner—was looking in astonished fashion at her swollen, discolored face; but the knowledge of the fact was very fleeting, for her husband's voice recalled all her interest to him and to his sufferings.

"Oh, Bonnie! Bonnie!" he said. "I am

so glad that you have come! The doctor does not seem to understand. It is the old trouble, Bonnie, the pain, the thirst, the nausea."

"Dear!" she said, bending over him, "have you been buying and taking more patent medicines and dangerous drugs at the office?"

He answered "Yes" to her with his eyes; he was too weak and sick to speak more words.

"I think, doctor," she said, looking up, "that we had better use an emetic."

The doctor was a young man, and but recently received into the medical ranks, and he took umbrage at any suggestion made to him concerning the treatment of a patient under his care, and particularly to advice given by a woman, who evidently was addicted to drink, and who in one of her recent debauches had fallen and badly disfigured her face.

"I am not in the habit, madame," he said severely, "of applying remedies that are not applicable to the condition and the symptoms of my patient. I perfectly realize Mr. Mackirby's cause of illness—indigestion takes on many forms and

guises. Mr. Mackirby, madame, has an acute attack of what we know in the profession as cardalgia, and perhaps gastralgia, of the stomach."

"I do not question your ability," said Mrs. Mackirby, gently; "but for more than ten years my husband has been subject to just such attacks as these—some more, some less violent—and I have come to know that the best method of relief is that which I intend to apply. Nothing else has saved him from death many a time before; nothing else will save him now. Our family physician, who is absent from the city, would convince you that I am correct if he were here."

"Am I, then, to imply, madame, that your husband is in the habit of feeding himself on poisons, and that he is sometimes careless and overreaches the dose?"

"You may imply what you choose," she said, in answer, "but I shall apply my remedy."

Her manner quieted the young man, but his pride was wounded, and he held Mrs. Mackirby a grudge, and he did not fail to use it to her disparagement when time and opportunity gave occasion.

CHAPTER V.

The treatment prescribed by Mrs. Mackirby to Mr. Mackirby was so eminently a success that the gentleman in question, a little weak and a trifle less pugnacious than usual, went down to his office the next day and brought back his bosom friend and boon companion, Mr. Jack Thornely, to luncheon. They had a mutual engagement for the afternoon and evening, and proposed to drive to the rendezvous together.

Mrs. Mackirby presided at luncheon. The swelling on her face had considerably moderated, but the purple streaks still remained.

"Mrs. Mackirby had a bad slip-up yesterday," said Mr. Mackirby, helping himself to ham and lettuce; "isn't she fetching, Jack? Aye?"

Mr. Thornely allowed his bold black eyes to search the face of his hostess in a way that should have made her husband rise up and kick him from the room and the house.

But as it was, he merely smiled as he saw the hot blood and the faint paleness succeed each other in his wife's bruised face.

"Bonnie," he continued, "knows all manner of lotions and balms to hide blemishes. What did you put on this time, Bonnie?"

"It is a lotion that grandmother used to use," she answered, "and really it is a wonderful thing. I suppose the arsenic that is one of the ingredients is answerable in large measure for effacing discolorations."

"I should think," said Mr. Thornely, "that arsenic would be a very unsafe thing to have about, particularly where there are little children."

He looked at Mr. Mackirby, but Mrs. Mackirby answered: "I do not use crude arsenic; I get it by buying fly-paper and soaking it in water, and it is not often, I am thankful to say, that I have to use the remedy; and when it is necessary and I am steeping the fly-paper, I put it on a shelf, out of reach of the children, and caution everybody else about it."

"But," said Thornely, "suppose Mackirby should get hold of it. Mackirby is rather

fond of testing the effect of arsenic in its various forms upon himself."

"I think," answered the wife, "that it would take more than one dose of steeped fly-paper to seriously trouble Mr. Mackirby, and if such a thing did occur, there is always the mustard water, you know."

Her words seemed to anger Mr. Mackirby, but she, who was used to his moods and words, saw nothing to heed or to remember in the remarks he flung at her from the opposite end of the table, but the servants in the room found salable worth in every syllable in an hour and a day that was yet to come.

"Bonnie, this talk of arsenic and poison is no laughing matter; and you make a grave mistake in letting it seem as though you were indifferent at leaving about anything that can kill at sight—as easily as a pistol—Now, let us suppose that you were—just for argument, you know—a vicious-minded and fast young woman, rather than the dear domestic dove that you are! Let us suppose that you had grown weary of your middle-aged husband, and had fallen in love with a younger man. Let us sup-

pose that the man to whom you had ostensibly given your heart and hand should die suddenly. And suppose, my darling, it should be known that you had been in the habit of dabbling in poisons. Wise people would put two and two together, and the result might not be pleasant. Circumstantial evidence is an elastic condition; add to this a lover who could be proved, and a beauty, which, whether real or manufactured, answers one and the same purpose for the majority, and what a case you have!

"Robert, another roll! Ah, mother," for into the room had come a little old lady, very youthfully and fussily dressed, who went directly up to Mr. Mackirby's chair and gave him a bird-like, pecky kiss on his forehead, shook hands with Mr. Thornely, who came effusively forward, and then taking a chair beside her son, nodded toward his wife in half-unconscious token of recognition, as she said:

"I heard that you were at the bank yesterday, Bonnie. If you remember I asked you, as a particular favor, as I did not wish to bother dear William, to cash me five hundred pounds. Yes, William, I actually took

the trouble to write this request to your wife, and yet she obliges me, a woman nearly eighty years old, to come here and complain to you of her remissness! It has always been a matter of wonder to me that people speaking the same language, people supposed to be an offshoot of our own race, should be so completely lacking in every trait that is pre-eminently English. When has this American wife of yours ever shown me respect, courtesy or attention?"

"It's only a matter of long removal from the center of civilization, mother," said Mr. Mackirby, buttering his roll. "Turn any species of tame animals into the wilderness long enough, and they will lose every trace of obedience and submission."

"Well," cried the old lady, "I thank God on my bended knees every day of my life that you, William, have had the good sense not to bring a man child into the world." She stopped and glared indignantly at her daughter-in-law. "No, madame," she continued, with added fervor, "my son's name will never descend through you; no base American strain will mingle with our honorable pedigree. But, Bonnie, why did you

not get that money for me yesterday? You were out for a long time, and you didn't spend your entire afternoon at the bank, either!"

Mrs. Mackirby was spared answering by a little shrill scream from madame.

"Whatever have you done to your face?" she cried, holding her lorgnette in her palsied fingers, to her eyes, and gazing with an expression of entertaining interest into her daughter-in-law's disfigured countenance. "Not burning it with some vile, home-made cosmetic, I hope! It is vulgar enough to use those that are skillfully prepared and sold in shops, but such bungling creations as you are forever putting in are sure to end disastrously, if not fatally!"

It takes but a straw, they say, a straw more to make the burden too heavy for the camel's back.

"I use no cosmetics," answered young Mrs. Mackirby. "I do not need them; you, madame, use enough for the entire family."

The old lady dropped her eye-glasses with a clatter upon the plate before her.

"William!" she cried, working her mouth and nodding her head, "do you hear this?"

Did you ever expect to be witness to such an insulting of the mother that bore you? In your own house and at your own table!" and then she fell to weeping softly, behind the corner of a small lace handkerchief.

Perhaps the unusual evidence of bravery of speech in his usually submissively silent young wife touched some sense of admiration in Mr. Mackirby; perhaps the memory of the blow that he had given her gave him a tinge of shame, perhaps he recalled her attendance upon him in yesterday's illness—perhaps a great many things, but at all events he rose, threw down his napkin, walked over to the mantle, took a cigar from his pocket and lighted it, and after the fire was well started, and he had thrust a hand into each of his breeches pockets, he said, addressing himself to Thornely:

"If heaven means wife and mother-in-law for me, I prefer to be excused! Just fancy this accompaniment to one's meals on an average of once or twice in a week the year round! I say, Bonnie, you go up to the library and write mother out her check. It is a big one, but it will do you no harm to

sacrifice some bonnets and gowns, and perhaps their loss will teach you to guard that too out-spoken tongue of yours. Come on, Jack, it is quite time that we were starting."

CHAPTER VI.

The twilight was fading into the gloom of night, as Mrs. Mackirby sat in the school-room with her children gathered about her. The two older girls were on footstools at her side, and baby Bonnie was cuddled into her mother's arms, her head pillowed upon her mother's breast.

"Mother, dear," said Marion, the oldest, "tell us about the time that you had the tableaux at school, and most about the ones that you took part in."

"Well," said Mrs. Mackirby, "once upon a time—" "Mother," said eight-year-old Esther, breaking in upon the recital, "Parks says that her cousin, Bridget Hogan's second cousin's uncle was named Patrick Hennesy and that he went over in the steerage to America and that he joined a great Indian society. What is the name of it, sister?"

"Tammany Braves."

"Yes. Too Many Braves—that's it! And, mother, he comes back to Ireland now on visits, and he scatters gold! And Parks

says that he's a real blooded American gentleman! that he keeps his hat on all the time! Parks says he wouldn't take it off to her Majesty! And she says the 'Queen's Own' daren't lay a finger on him to make him!"

"Oh, never mind what Parks says, Esther," says Marion, reprovingly. "Let mother tell about the tableaux."

"Well," proceeded Mrs. Mackirby, "some very beautiful tableaux were arranged."

"Mother," breaks in Esther again, "did your grandfather come over from Ireland in the steerage to America? and did he get to be a boss? And is that the way you came to have all the money to take care of us and grandmother and Uncle Fred and Uncle Dick?"

"I take care of grandmother and Uncle Fred and Uncle Dick! Who told you so?"

"I did," says Marion, looking up into her mother's face.

"I was over at grandmother's the other day, and she fell asleep, and Kittie, her maid, asked me if I would be a good girl, and go and sit behind the window-curtain and be as quiet and still as a mouse,

until she came back. So I said yes, I would, and in a little while Kittie went away, and in a little while more Uncle Fred came in, and grandma woke up; but I staid behind the curtain, because I had promised Kittie that I would, and it did seem as if they—grandma and Uncle Fred—would never stop talking. Uncle Fred said he believed father's habit was getting worse and worse, and he was sure it would get him some day, and then that even the squaw couldn't pull him through. What is a habit, mother, and who is the squaw? And grandmother called father a poor, dear boy, and said who could blame him! And Uncle Fred said father was heavily insure! What does heavily insure mean, mother? And he said the police was all made out for the brats, and he said that the squaw's dot was fixed in the same way, and that when father was drug drunk he had made him write a good thing on a paper, and that the rest of the squaw's money she could do as she liked with if she wasn't trapped. And that as soon as William was dead she would marry her sweetheart Jack. What did they mean, mother? I couldn't understand

much, but I seemed to know that they were talking about you and your money."

"You were quite mistaken, dear," said Mrs. Mackirby, as she tenderly smoothed the soft-braided hair.

"You did not hear Uncle Fred and grandma say these things. I will tell you what happened. You fell asleep behind the window-curtains! Don't you remember the odd things that Alice in Wonderland dreamed about the March hare and the mad hatter, and the rest? And you know she was lying all the time dreaming on her sister's lap."

"I don't think I was asleep!" says Marion, gravely. "And besides, mother, I have heard them talk about you before. I have heard them say that——"

But her mother's hand was put gently over her lips. "Never mind what they say, or have said, my little daughter. It is wrong to listen to what is not intended for our ears; it is still more wrong to repeat that which we have heard. And now listen, and don't interrupt me again until I have quite finished my story about the tableaux we gave in the dear homeland across the sea."

CHAPTER VII.

But Bonnie Mackirby did think of what Marion had said to her. She thought of it all the evening, as she sat in her box at her husband's side at the play; she thought of it through what seemed to her the interminable hours of a night. When she met her husband at the breakfast-table next morning, she was dressed for the street, and she told him that she was going to take the morning train to London.

Mr. Mackirby was interested in his "Times," and acknowledged her offer of information by gruntingly remarking that he "supposed it meant a fresh supply of bonnets and frocks."

So Mrs. Mackirby, having finished her coffee, went out, and walking to the station, took a train and arrived in due time at her destination.

Taking a cab she directed the man to drive her to a quarter of the city occupied by one of the prominent government offices.

On reaching the gray building she paid and dismissed the cab, mounted the steps, and was about to enter when she came face to face with an old gentleman, evidently on his way to a much-coronated coupé that was drawn up before the door. This old gentleman bore evidence in his furrowed face, in his carriage and bearing, of birth and breeding. And the timid woman, whose heart was beating wildly with the daringness of her undertaking, had an impulse to speak to him.

"Pardon me," she said, slowly (for it was hard for her to utter words), "but could you tell me at what hour it would be possible for me to find the Honorable Lord Blank Blankshire in his office?"

She had raised her veil, and was looking the old gentleman straight in the face. He lifted his hat.

"I am the man you name," he said, gravely, and looking a second time into her face. "I am at your service. Will you come with me?"

He stepped aside, still hat in hand, for her to precede him across the threshold; then preceding her he led the way through a

series of busy rooms, and paused before a door at which stood a liveried servant.

"Do not allow me," said the gentleman to the servant, "to be disturbed. This way, madame."

Once within the handsome room he drew a chair for his guest, and when she was seated he took one himself. He saw that the beautiful young face was troubled; that it was difficult for her to secure sufficient control to speak calmly, so he said some conventional things about the recent unusual weather, and that he feared the continual dampness would affect the health of the city; would perhaps be productive of loss to trade. As he talked he noted a tinge of color coming back to the fair skin with a real pleasure, and a pity for her sorrow (though it was unknown to him) was strong within him.

"You do not know me," she said at last, "and for reasons which I will try to explain, I should not have made myself known to you if there had been any other help this side of heaven. I never wished until last night to be a Roman Catholic. I then envied those who when their minds are burdened and heavy laden, could go and pour out their

cares and troubles and perplexities into some human ear, with the blessed assurance that their thoughts and words were as sealed books to the one who listened, his only mission in listening being to pour comfort and peace upon the downcast and downtrodden; to make them look up, and see not the darkness, but the light.

"I have always said my prayers, but I never prayed until last night. I had to find God. And my poor tossed soul finally reached somewhere a place that for a better word I will call home, and then, my lord, I repeated over and over this childish request, 'Find me one friend! one friend! one friend!' and as I knelt, saying again and again this childish petition, your name came to me, and I seemed to understand that it was Our Father who had put it in my mind. I was afraid to go to sleep, lest it should slip away from me (my mind is very weary, my lord, and my recollection is less keen than it used to be). So I kept repeating your name over till day and then I came to you. I am here!"

No tears, no trembling; a parched, hungry soul, looking up at him through sad, sad

eyes. His keen gray eyes felt a mist before them; this man of iron nerve, this statesman, noted for his force, will, and haughty reserve.

He said gently as though to a child whom he cherished, "Do not doubt that Our Father guided you in this decision, and speak to me freely. My time and my earnest attention are at your service."

It was then that the storm broke. The tortured soul bowed her head within her hands and sobbed such sobs as only come when one who has endured a life's hell bravely is lifted up, and breathes the air of mercy, which is a bit of heaven come down to earth.

He said no word to her of comfort—he took a book from the table and began to read; he never looked toward her; he seemed quite unconscious of her presence; but she knew this was not really so, she felt his strong unspoken sympathy, and at last she spoke, and at the sound of her voice he laid down his book, but he did not look at her; he listened.

"It is a rather long story," she said, "and in order that I may justify myself

in forcing my affairs upon your time and attention, I want to tell you that which I think no one else in England knows—that is, that I am, through my father's family, lineally descended from a certain Lord Blank Blankshire, who was sent by the Crown to New England to fill an official position in Colonial days. My father, my grandfather, my great-grandfather were all intensely patriotic Americans, and for some reasons best known to themselves they made this fact of caste as much a matter of oblivion as possible. I do not think my mother, (for whom everything representing a title had a powerful fascination), possessed the slightest clue to this ancestral link of my father's. The story, or history of genealogical record, he left under seal to me, his only heir, to be opened when I was twenty-five. With this record was an old ring—it seems to be emblematic." She took off her glove, and pulled from her finger a strange circlet of beaten gold. Upon its wide outer surface in enamels there was a triangle with the figure '32' in it, and pillars, squares, and other Masonic emblems. She then pointed to the inside of the ring in which

was engraved the arms of the Blankshires, and these words, in old English lettering, "Defende thyne owne to the deathe."

The old man took from his own finger this ring's mate and laid them side by side; then he took her ring, raised it to his lips, and slipped it back upon her finger.

"If," he said, slowly, "at any time during my life, you need my help, send this ring to me, and should trouble come to you when I am gone, my oldest son will understand. This circlet possesses a double power—it bears the emblems of Masonry without, it holds the motto of our house within."

CHAPTER VIII.

"My lord," said Mrs. Mackirby, "I wish to exact a promise from you, that for the present, you will keep silence regarding my visit and all that you have discovered through it, and that you will never, under any stress of circumstances or conditions (no matter how urgent they may be), unless I give you permission, seem to have ever heard of me."

"And why this request, little cousin?" said the old gentleman. "I have a good wife, who would gladly welcome you as kinswoman, and daughters who would enjoy meeting you, and re-opening a discussion pro and con as to the causes that led up to our estrangement through and by the American Revolution."

But Mrs. Mackirby shook her head. "My lord," she said, "I have known of this relationship for more than a year! And I have not breathed it to a single soul! I have kept the papers sealed, with instructions that in

case of my death the package should not be opened until my youngest daughter was of age. I have worn the ring on a chain, about my neck, having had a jeweled shell made (like a locket) to fit over it. And I have done all this because the family into which I have married would not appeal to you and yours, my lord.

"I was married when I was scarcely sixteen, to Mr. Mackirby; he was then in business in America; he was a friend of my mother's (my father was dead). My mother was ambitious for me, her only child. I had a large fortune, and the investments made by my father were so wise that the income continues to grow. I was a very childish girl, my lord, very inexperienced and simple-hearted; therefore the awakening to a realization of much that life means was a shock, from which I shall never recover. My husband had lived nearly fifty years in the world when he married me, and I think all my childish expressions of surprise and disapproval were most annoying and distasteful to him. My mother told me that Mr. Mackirby's family were people of exalted rank and fashion; that his grand-

father, William Wiggins, was a peer of the realm. But a title founded on excellent brewing does not insure to the brewer, or his heirs, *savoir-faire*.

"I do not wish to discuss the father of my children, my lord, or his relatives, and I should not have said so much as this did I not wish you to understand the principal reason for my being here, to know the something you can, I feel sure, do for me."

"I appreciate all that you have so graciously and delicately implied, my dear Mrs. Mackirby," said his lordship, "and I beg that you will understand me as not being disloyal or discourteous to you when I say that I entirely agree with you in believing that the Mackirbys are not desirable additions to certain forms of what is called conventional life.

"We Blankshires are not, as you probably know, a rich family; our names are seldom recorded in the lists of those who frequent Vanity Fair. We have a good, ample income, a home in the country unincumbered by debt, its grounds are kept up, its tenantry self-respectful and thrifty, its cottages clean, modern and sanitary. We have a shooting-

lodge, with plenty of land for sport and plenty of sport on the land. We have an old town house, with its old furniture, old plate, and old pictures, and in town and country we entertain our old friends; and in other words, we Blankshires live the lives of old-fashioned gentlemen and gentlewomen.

“We have never had a scandal, or produced a sensation; our men have been upright, decent, and God-fearing, our women modest, moral and domestic. True the head of our house has always been assigned to some place of governmental honor and trust, but then we have been faithful stewards; so the honor conferred upon us does not seem to have been misplaced; all this to show you why I so readily comply with your request, but it is with this proviso: that you will never fail to let me be of service to you, or to your children, if I can.”

“I thank you, my lord,” she said. “I think we perfectly understand each other, and now to come to my particular reason for troubling you. My husband, my lord, is not, I fully believe, responsible for much

that he says and does; he has been a dyspeptic for many years, and after dosing himself with every quack medicine that he has seen advertised, or has been told of, he has finally come to taking crude arsenic; he mixes it, in ever-increasing quantities, in his food and drink, and I have reason to believe it is affecting his brain as much as though it were alcohol. He grows more and more impatient with me; he has become a monomaniac on the subject of my being an American. He seems to believe that I induced him to marry me. He seems to consider that I have no rights to even my own independent income.

“The Mackirby family have an intimate friend, my lord (a Mr. Jack Thornely), who I have often heard them say is related to your wife’s family. This man, for what purpose I cannot say, is constantly forced upon me as escort abroad, as companion in my own home. Not long since, my lord, he (Mr. Jack Thornley) completed his insulting attentions by sending to me, through my maid, an unsealed note. Its written contents were couched in the most endearingly familiar terms. It told

me shameful truths—truths, my lord, of my husband's daily life—it offered me opportunity to engage in liaisons with this friend of the Mackirby family. I burned the note, and then, my husband coming in, I was unable to restrain my pent-up indignation. Shame kept me from speaking of the insult I had just received, but I told my husband that I should divorce him and take my children. Then I did that which I was heartily sorry for, my lord; I told my husband that I had supported him and his family for ten years, and—" she paused.

"He struck you," said the old gentleman.
"He struck you across your face."

She did not answer; she could not.

"That same afternoon, my lord, I went to my bank, and from there sent, by special messenger, a note to Mr. Thornely at his club. I asked him to meet me on its receipt at a respectable hotel, in the public parlor.

"He was there when I reached it, and I pleaded with him never to come to my house again. I asked him to give me back the note that I had written to him, and oh, my lord, he asked me why I was so anxious

to retain this one formal epistle, when he had in his possession innumerable love-letters from me, he said he would, if I attempted to thwart his coming and going, send them with a note of explanation to my husband. My lord, I never wrote that man one line in my life, except the note I have mentioned, and I have come to you to ask if there is any way in your power by which you can remove Mr. Jack Thornely from Ploverlie."

The white-haired gentleman sat looking down at his desk for some time in silence.

"I am sorry," he said at last, "that you asked him to meet you at the hotel; it was a foolish and most unwise thing to do. Women, young and old, are too apt to be governed by impulse. Dickens never gave a better piece of advice than that which he puts into Mr. Meagle's mouth, when he advises Tattycorum 'to count five and twenty,' my dear. If in your first impulse you had stopped to count five and twenty, you wouldn't, I know you wouldn't, have found courage to do such an unwifely thing. Nay, nay, little cousin; don't be grieved; the truest friendship and the most loyal is

that which uncovers its real thought. But I shall make, at once, an arrangement to send my wife's nephew to look after some personal business of mine in Wales. I shall take him completely out of your life and he never shall know why I became interested in his welfare."

"I wish," said Bonnie Mackirby, rising, and laying her hand in that of her kinsman, "I wish that you might understand all that the simple 'I thank you' that I now utter, implies. I wish you might know all the gratitude that is in my heart! Oh, I wish you could know."

And so they parted.

CHAPTER IX.

Twenty-four hours later Mr. Jack Thornely and Mr. Frederick Mackirby sat together in an alcove, in one of the lounging-rooms of the Fraternity Club. Jack, calm, complacent, and nonchalant; Frederick, fussy, fuming and fidgety.

"And you don't know how this sudden placing of you by your uncle came about?" Frederick said, fixing his snake-like eyes on Jack's face. "It seems to me a something resulting from more than mere chance. You couldn't possibly put the old man off for a few weeks, could you? It is a pity not to finish the thing up."

"You d——d fool!" interrupted Jack, in a pleasant, cheerful, jolly, good-fellowship tone, "you don't suppose, do you, that I am going to lose a life-position, which entails little work and a good income, for the chance of a few thousand pounds that I may gain by hunting down your game for you? You don't think for a holy minute that I would

allow myself to be mixed up now in a divorce scandal? No, sir! I burned every one of those letters last night. I burned every trace of the whole business, but your letters to me; for, mark you, if I were supposed to have been diverting myself in any such direction, the sanctimonious and honorable mummied kinsman would not take me up with a pair of tongs."

"But," said Frederick, "I can't get it out of my head that the squaw went up to London for some purpose. She is a clever one, Jack. She might have suspected and gone to him."

The look of scorn that Jack Thornely cast upon Frederick had its effect upon that man; he winced and looked out of the window.

"Bonnie Mackirby go to the office and ask for Blankshire! You might better try to convince me that she mounted to the gates of heaven and consulted Saint Peter. The way to his lordship's official presence is like the way of the transgressor, it is hard (to get at); it is hedged about with letters of introduction and appointment; it is a matter of ways and days to compass, and besides a

woman that lets her husband beat her, and disgrace her; that lets her relatives by marriage insult her, and live off her bounty, hasn't enough spirit to do more than make lotions to heal her bruises. The squaw visit my uncle! Frederick, I have long since paid you the compliment of being the cleverest knave of my acquaintance; but I did not know until this afternoon, that you were the biggest fool, as well."

"Well," said Frederick, more meekly and amiably than his companion's eulogy would seem to merit, "we won't go into further discussion. All that you can do for me now is to kindly return those letters which you have just mentioned, as having in your possession."

Jack laughed. "They have their price," he said, slowly. "If you cannot pay me for them your sister-in-law can. I will take them to her to-morrow morning unless you redeem them this evening with five hundred pounds."

"If I give those letters to Mrs. Mackirby and she pays me for them, I will go to her husband, and so help me God, I will unfold to him all your damnable plot! I will con-

fess my part in it, and brute and arsenic-eater though he is, he will collect enough remnants of scattered manhood to resent what you have done and hope to do.

"If you pay me, the game, so far as I am concerned, is still yours to lose or win. One woman more or less does not matter, and what you do with her is nothing to me. What I want is five hundred pounds for the services I have rendered you in the past; for my silence in the future."

"But how the devil am I to get the money? Forging love-letters is one thing! Forging a check is another! Now, how am I to get this five hundred pounds?"

"That is a matter for you to evolve, my dear fellow, and I shall do myself the pleasure of waiting upon you for your answer—a pecuniary answer—at, say, nine this evening. I must tear myself away now. There are calls to make and notes to write, for Blankshire expects me to report for duty speedily.

"Listen; a suggestion; it may be helpful! Mrs. Mackirby drew a check for five hundred pounds for your mother the other day. She, your mother, has been to the bank and has had it cashed. Probably, like a great many

other dear old ladies, she has taken it home and hidden it away in the bolster-case, or a stocking-foot, or under the carpet; get her to tell you where it is, and then it will be an easy matter for you to transfer it from its hiding-place to me."

CHAPTER X.

Madame Mackirby was in a particularly happy mood. She had heard, through her second son Richard, or Dick, as he was familiarly called, that Mr. Jack Thornely had been made the recipient of a good income, with a trifling amount of work attached to it. But Mr. Jack Thornely's interests for better or worse had nothing to do with Madame Mackirby's present buoyancy.

She was gloating over the thought of the sorrow this transplanting of the man in question would bring to her daughter-in-law, whom, she had been brought to believe (by her son Frederick, by her own maid Kittie, and by Mrs. Mackirby's maid, Elizabeth), was carrying on a flagrant flirtation with Jack. She really should have been mourning, instead of rejoicing at Jack's going, but in her present excitement she did not realize how much she would miss the scandalous reports that had been served up

to her with her afternoon's cup of tea. These interesting recitals had been better than a tonic to her poor old body, but now she only knew or believed that she knew that William's wife was suffering; that her heart would ache; that she would shed tears and perhaps, oh joyous thought, that she would pine away, and lose flesh and color. She felt herself growing quite juvenile and kittenish at such a prospect, and she hummed what she intended to be a tune, which proved itself a something more resembling in sound a death-rattle than anything else.

Then both her boys had come to pay her a visit—they were in her sitting-room, and Bonnie was the theme of her mother-in-law's conversation, and what so natural as that from Bonnie, Frederick should be brought to think of sneak-thieves, and the successes they were having in private houses, and how powerless the police seemed to be to stop their depredations.

"Of course, mother," said Frederick, with a reverential sort of gentleness in his voice and manner, "you never leave your jewels out of the safe, and you only keep sufficient

money in your purse for ordinary daily demands?"

"Oh, yes," she said; she "was very particular; very careful;" but she made a motion to Frederick, unseen by Dick, to the effect that he was to change the subject, and that she would explain something to him when they were alone.

Frederick was her favorite child; she explained this by saying that they had so much in common. Now on this particular afternoon Richard was obliging—he got up and without the ceremony of a leave-taking made himself conspicuous through his absence.

Richard was a conundrum to his family, from the fact that while he lived at home he kept his affairs—his goings and comings—strictly to himself, and never expressed the slightest interest in what concerned anybody else. He was said to be "blasé," "born tired," and all that sort of thing. It was said that "everything bored him, and he bored everybody." At all events, he rarely talked, and seldom listened. He slept a great part of his time, cared nothing for books, seldom played cards or discussed politics. He was very fond of horses, and

had the reputation among horsey people of having horse sense and a betting-head. He was very successful in his racing ventures, and in this way was, with his own small income as a nest-egg, able to be quite independent of any support from his mother, which meant taking charity from his American sister-in-law.

Another thing, in the family discussions and conversations concerning "William's wife" he took no part, and because silence was the habit of his life his mother and brother never doubted that his feelings and sentiments, in this respect, accorded with their own.

As soon as Richard's footsteps were heard going down the stairs, Frederick fell fiercely upon his mother.

"Do you mean to tell me," Frederick began, fixing his eyes on the withered, trembling creature before him, "do you mean to tell me, mother, that you took all the money Bonnie gave you the check for out of the bank? Now you need not go to whining and crying! It won't touch me! Not a bit of it! How many times have I told you that it was impossible to trust the

best servants that ever lived? Now speak up! Where is that money?"

"Frederick, my dear boy, do not be so severe!" said the old lady, with a piteous second-childhood quiver of grief on her lips. "I took it all out because at my time of life one never can tell what might happen, and if I should die suddenly the law would divide everything into three parts. Now William does not want anything, and Dick does not need anything; but you, dear, with your delicate, refined and expensive tastes, do, and I thought I would give it all to you for a birthday gift. Don't you see, dear?"

"Not a bit of an excuse, mother!" said Frederick, more severely if possible than before, "but the question is, where have you hidden the money? Let me take it and put it in the safe for to-night, and to-morrow morning I will go with you and deposit it."

"Oh, it's all right. I assure you it's all right, dear," she said, more cheerfully. "I was very clever, and I'll tell you about it. When Kittie went down for my tea (the day that I brought it home) I pulled out the drawers of my closet and made a ladder of them, and I climbed up and put the bank

notes on the top shelf, in the corner under the paper."

Frederick went at once to the place designated, and he found the crisp bills where his mother had put them. He leisurely tucked them under his cuff and up into his shirt-sleeve.

"They are gone, mother," he called out to her; "not a trace of them on the shelf. In all probability you dreamed that you put them there. You are always dozing after you have been out in the air. You probably dropped them in the street or left them in the cab." By this time he was back and by her side. "Oh, mother, mother! when will you ever learn to leave your money matters to me? I won't scold you, dear—scolding does no good; but do try to learn a lesson from this experience. Now, won't you, mother?"

The shriveled arms wound themselves about her boy's neck, and she laid her plumpered and painted and powdered face against his.

"My darling," she said, "how patient you are with your foolish old mother, how gentle and kind. The loss of the money is more

than repaid to me through this evidence of filial devotion."

Frederick patted the thin, dyed hair gently. He had a slim, delicate-fingered, flexible hand.

"Well, well, mother," he said, "we won't break our hearts over the loss, even if five hundred pounds does not grow on every bush; so promise me, dear, promise me really and truly to keep this matter a secret between you and me. If you were to tell Kittie it would go straight to Elizabeth, and Bonnie would find it out and tell William, and he might get it into his fast softening brain that you were growing childish and not to be trusted, and if he believed that he would order the squaw to dole out money to us, and where would I be then, mother? You will be silent for my sake, won't you?"

"Yes, my precious boy," said Madame Mackirby, humbly. "What wouldn't a mother be willing to do for such a son?"

CHAPTER XI.

Mr. William Mackirby sat alone in his private office one pleasant day at the noon hour. He was doing rather an unusual thing for a gentleman of independent means to trouble himself about, particularly when his home was only a short distance in one direction, his club only a short distance in another.

He was cooking something that looked like a farina, or white cornmeal porridge, over an oil stove. A tap was heard upon the door, and before he could rise or say "Come in," a burly figure of a seafaring man was framed in the open doorway, and a gruff, hearty voice was calling out: "Hello, Mackirby, old man! How goes it?"

A gleam of real pleasure lit up Mr. Mackirby's fishy eyes. "Well, captain," he cried, leaving his chair and coming toward the man with both hands extended, "I never expected to see you again. Where did you blow from?"

"Oh," said the big, cheerful, red-faced tar, "from here and there and everywhere. The bark 'Blanche' is like all the rest of her sex—contrary and uncertain. See? Ha, ha!"

"But," says Mr. Mackirby, infected into a sort of jollity, "what, I repeat again, brings you here?"

"A cargo," answered the captain; "it's unloaded, and I'm going to start for home (wind and waves permitting) to-morrow. I never feel a bit of comfort in foreign parts, Mackirby; I never can draw a full, deep breath under any monarchy. No Yankee ever can—it's against the grain; but I didn't want to be so near and not drop in to ask after the pretty little American wife, my townswoman, and the babies."

"Mrs. Mackirby is quite well, and there is another child. There are three little girls now, and I hope you can find time enough to go up to the house—it's only a short walk from here—and pay them a visit. Mrs. Mackirby will be very glad to see you and show you the babies."

"Well," said the captain, taking out a huge watch and studying its face as though he looked to it not only to tell him the time,

but to decide his acceptance or declination of engagements, "well, I guess I will. I have nothing pressing to do for two or three hours. Yes, I'll go up; but say, William, what are you puttering with?"

Mr. Mackirby stopped stirring the porridge, blew out the flame, and poured the white mixture he had been cooking from the saucepan into a deep saucer; then he took a little paper out of his vest-pocket, opened it carefully, and deposited its contents into the porridge.

"You would be horrified," he now said, turning to the captain, "if you knew what this powder was that I have just been sprinkling into the dish."

"No, I wouldn't," answered the captain. "Why should I? There is no harm in white pepper."

"But this isn't pepper. It is arsenic!"

"Good God, man!" cried the captain, turning pale under his tan, "that is a deadly poison!"

"Deadly to some, life-giving to others, my dear captain. We all take poison in some form, some more, some less, and always with beneficial results. Now I have,

by years of cautious administration, accustomed myself to eat, with perfect safety, a quantity of arsenic mixed with my food. That gives me new life, and yet would undoubtedly kill you; but taste a little bit of this porridge. A little couldn't hurt you."

"No, I thank you," said the captain. "Plain, wholesome vituals are good enough for me. I don't meddle with stuff that I don't understand what it's given for and what it's going to do to my insides, which are, I am free to confess, unknown continents to me. Of course, there are a few things I can tend up to personally. If I have a pain in my pit, I swig Jamaica ginger, strong and hot, and maybe I plaster on wet mustard. If I get a queer feeling in my throat, I chuck in camphor water; if it gets further down and there's a cough, I try onion syrup (prime, sir, prime). But beyond the symptoms I have named, what's left of darkest Africa is not to be mentioned side by side with my ignorance of what's under my skin. So, when I feel anything grumbling or gnawing, I go to a regular out and out pilgarlic, one of the kind that has a pretty typewriter, and a boy in buttons, and

a reception room, and rooms with several other names that you have to pass through before you get to the man you are after. And then he asks you: 'Where is it?' and you tell him that she is here, or there, or somewhere else, as the case may be, and of course he puts one of them barometers under your tongue, and counts your wrist, and thumps your chest, and listens to your back, and then stops and looks d—d wise. Then he writes out some Latin words on a paper, and he says, 'Take this to the druggist,' and you says, 'How much?' and he says, with a gentle sigh, as though he was devoting his life to charity and found it a tax on his constitution, 'Ten dollars, if you please.' And you give it to him, and he bows, and touches a bell and says to some unseen listener, 'Next.' And as you pass out, another ten dollars walks in—it may be in petticoats or it may be in trousers.

"Then you go to the druggist and you hand him the paper, and he says, 'All right, sir,' and he leaves you alone with the bottles and the smells, and then he comes back and says, 'A dollar and a half, please; take as directed, and be sure to shake.' Now,

William, like as not the shake that I have to take has poison in it; but I don't know it, and don't want to know it."

The captain here came to an abrupt pause and he began to look confused and uncomfortable, as we see children do who have bravely spoken their pieces and then fall into a stage fright and so do not seem to be able to make their bow to the audience or get back to their seats.

The captain fumbled with his hat for a minute and then he said (apropos of nothing): "Jim Wilkins, my first mate, got married last week. He married a pretty young Irish girl. He's old enough to be her father; but then there is no fool like an old fool." Here an idea struck him of the personality of his remark, and he took recourse in his hat. He again found inspiration there, and it was happier.

"My old first mate, Joe Fay the one that used to be with me when I shipped cotton for you, is dead. He was just about your build and complexion, and he went off one day with a stroke of apoplexy."

Meanwhile Mr. Mackirby had eaten all the porridge, even to permitting himself the

inelegant privilege of scraping the dish. There was a pink flush on his cheeks now, and his eyes were very bright. "Well, old fellow," he said, "now do go up to the house, Mrs. Mackirby will be more than delighted to see you."

CHAPTER XII.

"So these are your little girls, Mrs. Mackirby. Well, they are as pretty as pictures, and as fat as porpoises. As for you," said the captain, with an honest disregard of his hostess' vanity, "I never would know you if I met you on the street. I don't believe," said the captain, studying her earnestly, "that the English climate agrees with you any better than it does with me."

"It was very kind of you," said Mrs. Mackirby, "to come. It is most delightful to see anyone from home, and you won't mind if I ask you some questions, will you?"

"Lord, no!" said the good-natured sailor, taking a chair and getting all three of the little girls upon his knees. "Now, if there is anything you'd like to know about lineals or collaterals or family trees, I'm primed. The whole country over yonder has suddenly waked up to a sense of the honor it means to be a son, grandson, or great-grandson of

some man who fought in the American Revolution. If you will believe it, down in our cemetery there isn't a lichen left on a tombstone. All of them have been literally scraped off by grandfather hunters."

Mrs. Mackirby smiled. "I suppose," she said, "if I were at home I should catch the inspiration and be interested in this genealogical research, too, and I often wonder if I were at home again how I should stand regarding the suffrage question."

"You'd stand up for suffrage, you would; of course you would," said the captain, beaming all over with the brilliancy of his suggestion. "No woman with a grain of sense could have been married to an Englishman for ten years and think of rejecting suffrage rights. No, sir!

"There was a time when I laughed at suffrage; but I don't laugh any more. No, sir! There came a day when I said to my wife: 'Jane,' says I, 'I believe in suffrage for women. Because why? Take the school question to begin with. I'm off eleven months out of very twelve hunting a living for you and the kids. You stay close to home, you watch the children, you take 'em

to school, and you know all about the school-house, and whether it's warm or cold, well ventilated or full of foul air. You know what manner of women folks and men folks the trustees is histin' in onto us. I wouldn't know if I stayed at home and fixed my mind onto it. If a girl was darned pretty I'd be apt to think she had all the educational requirements.' You see, that's the man of it. 'And besides,' I says, 'if I was to die, they'd tax you just the same. It's a queer law,' I says, 'that takes and gives to man and takes and don't give to woman.'

"So I says, 'You walk up and don't you be afraid to put in your slip.' Well, Jane went. I drove her to it; but she voted all right, and her man got in, and I'm inclined to believe, good wife as she was before, that voting has improved her. Her bread rises just as well, her house is as tidy, the stockings are all darned and the clothes mended; but besides this, she finds time to be interested (with a great many other good women) for order, uplifting, and broader and better methods of what she calls citizenship."

"But, captain, tell me something about the dear old town. I suppose the streets are as

shady in summer as ever—and the snow. I suppose the snow in winter looks just as white on the hills. Do the birds gather in the spring in the thicket near Pingree's hollow? Dear, dear! what a chattering they used to keep up at sunset and sunrise. And has Judge Brown still a big gold-fish pond in his garden? Tell me something about our old house."

The captain looked at her keenly, he cleared his throat of a lump, took out his handkerchief and blew such a blast upon it that the children still upon his knees vibrated perceptibly.

"Nothing is so pretty as it used to be," he said, gently. "The town is past its prime; it is better to remember it as you do than to see it as it is." A bright and cheering idea struck him. "You would be pleased to see your ma's tombstone, Mrs. Mackirby. It beats your father's all to nothing."

Then seeing that, with the best intentions in the world, he had made a mistake, the captain pulled out his watch. It evidently told him that it was time to go, so he rose, and with hearty handshakes all round found his hat and took himself off.

CHAPTER XIII.

There was a house party down at Glen Hall, my Lord Blankshire's place in the country.

The situation of the house and grounds was unusually secluded, and the scenery unlike Mrs. Browning's description, which says: "The English ground is cut up from fellowship with verdure, field from field, until you come to understand how Adam lived in a garden, for all the fields are tied up fast with hedges, nosegay-like. The hills are crumpled plains, the plains parterres, the trees round, and woolly ready to be clipt—all nature tamed." But all about Glen Hall was exceedingly wild. In the foreground there were a succession of lofty eminences, a portion of a chain of hills that extended into the next county, where they assumed a more rugged aspect, and still further north grew into mountains. The old house stood in a glen or dell, and it was built of such dark-colored stone that it

was not observable until one approached very near, for it was screened by the high ground of the park and backed by the noble woods.

Before the front was a large entrance court, encircled with iron palisades, and entered by an ancient gate, ornamented on its piers by cumbent birds and beasts. There was a center compartment with stone seats on either side, and all the architectural ornamentation, was of that mixed, grotesque kind which prevailed so universally in the Elizabethan period. Above the porch were the nine chief armorial bearings of the family, with this motto, carved in old English lettering into the stone: "Defende Thine Owne to the Deathe."

The interior of the house was in keeping with its exterior, from the great hall, hung thick with arms and ancient trophies of battle-field and chase, and the richly stained, mullioned windows, to the gallery and drawing-rooms, filled with the rare treasures of art and vertu that centuries of abundant means and intelligent appreciation had gathered into one stately home.

The estate lay about five miles from the

nearest railroad station (the village of Dingley Dell), and the road from thence all the way to the park gates was under an arch of grand old trees.

The family of Lord and Lady Blankshire consisted of two daughters and four sons. The girls had arrived first. They were still "ungathered roses" upon the family tree. The sons, even to the heir, were busy men, occupying positions of trust and honor; married and keeping homes of their own, and down at the hall now for the purpose of wishing all sorts of glad and good things to the dear gentle mother, whose returning birthday had brought them together. Not only the boys, but the boys' wives and one or two favorite and favored relations were at the hall.

The Blankshire girls (the father and the mother and the brothers spoke of them as the girls) had been presented at a drawing-room some twenty-two or three years before the time in which we write. They were then typical English maidens of sixteen, with stout, healthy figures, pink and white faces, clear brown eyes, dark brown hair, white teeth, and red lips. They were so

nearly fac-similes that it was difficult for any but their nearest and dearest friends to tell them apart, and a facetious gentleman, whose small wit was much appreciated by the exclusive rank and file, dubbed the fair debutantes "Number Eleven," a soubriquet that had remained theirs ever since, until, in their own particular world, they were never mentioned—in their absence—in any other way. Why they had never married was one of those puzzling questions which we are always asking ourselves when we see charming, clever, capable girls left unwooed and unwedded, while little heart-and-soul-lacking, empty-headed females of the human species go off, to use a vulgar but trite expression, "like hot cakes," in the matrimonial market.

But although the springtime of the lives of these women had passed and midsummer had come, they were in truth and reality girls still, through a sheltered and protected living, through the quiet round of doing good with which they filled their leisure hours. Their home had always been in the country, each year had a few duty weeks in town; but when the passing show was over

they had gladly returned to pastoral occupations and interests.

The Ladies Abigail and Deborah were fine horsewomen, experts at tennis and golf, and so it had come to pass that their companions were not exclusively matrons of forty who had been girls twenty odd years ago, but girls who were twenty years old to-day.

The three older brothers, Rupert, Harold, and Gordon, were married to typical, well-bred, well-portioned English women; but Gerald's wife (Gerald, the youngest of the flock) had come with the force of an exploding bomb into the old-fashioned family, whose laws concerning marriage and giving in marriage seemed to have been as fixed and unalterable as those ascribed to the Medes and Persians.

Gerald had been a frail child, and there were many years of his boyhood all strewn with physical pitfalls for the darling of the household. Thus it came to be that Gerald's word was law, that anything possessible under the sun, moon, or stars that he asked for was at his service. He was educated exclusively by tutors; his

mother and sisters constantly hovered about him and cared for him.

When Gerald was twenty-three a maiden sister of his mother's died, and she left all her entirely independent property of every description to her nephew and godson, Gerald Blankshire. The family unselfishly rejoiced in Gerald's good fortune, and they applauded his wisdom in deciding to take a trip round the world, via the United States of America. So one day he had said good-by, promising his mother and the girls to bring them back many curious and charming things. How well he kept his promise, in one particular at least, we shall see.

CHAPTER XIV.

Gerald had found New York an attractive place to tarry in, with beautiful homes and charming hostesses, and he had never in all his life seen so many lovely girls; but, having the entire globe to wander through before he should again see England's cliffs, he tore himself away from all the beguilements of modern Gotham and passing by many cities, arrived at Chicago, the wonderful young queen who rules her million subjects in her kingdom by the inland sea, the broad highway of water that marshals on its stormy bosom a vaster tonnage to the great city at its feet than to any other port in the New World.

There had been a wreck of such magnitude on the road over which the "limited" train bearing the Hon. Gerald Blankshire had to pass that his entrance was made into Chicago hours after the scheduled time in the early evening of what had been a drizzling November day.

Taking a cab, he was driven at once to the Elizabeth, a hotel which had been recommended to him by a New York acquaintance as "the least bad of the lot." He meant simply to stay long enough to take in what he had been told were the objects of interest—the Stock Yards and the tall buildings—and then he intended to hurry on to the Pacific slope; but fate had other intentions for and toward the honorable young Englishman.

CHAPTER XV.

The elevator man had gone down into the basement to help the engineer fix the shifting and rigging valve, leaving word with a clerk whose desk was directly across from the elevator to see that no one got into the car in his absence. Upon being assured by the elevator man that he had provided against such a possibility the engineer started the machine to run to the top into the automatic.

The car kept going for two or more stories, and then suddenly dropped, coming to an abrupt stop. The engineer looked perplexedly at the elevator man; then he tried to get the car to descend, and finding it would not come down, he tried to get it to go up.

"Say, John," he cried, "some infernal fool is monkeying with that elevator. Go up and see where it is."

The man came running back pale and breathless. "Come up right away!" he said

between his gasps. "She is stuck between the third and fourth floors, and there are people in her."

The engineer looked down from the landing on the fourth floor and through the top of the car. He could see three people—a bell-boy, a gentleman, and a young lady. The bell-boy was on the verge of hysterics. The gentleman was shouting out a series of incoherent questions. The young lady was sitting quietly and composedly on the seat.

The engineer managed to explain to the gentleman that there was no danger, that the safety plank was set securely; but that, part of it being broken, the car could not be released until it was repaired, which, of course, would take some time.

Being thus advised and relieved, the Honorable Mr. Blankshire (for it was the Honorable Gerald) began to breathe more freely, began to realize the close-at-hand proximity of a very charming girl. She was a little woman, childishly small; she had a fair, clear skin, light, wavy hair, and large, black-lashed gray eyes; her delicately-formed nose was a trifle too tip-tilted to be named Grecian, and her red-

lipped mouth was too firm and full of expression to be called pretty.

She was evidently boarding in the hotel, and coming up from the dining-room to her apartments when the accident transpired, for she had on neither hat nor wrap, and her gown suggested a rather elaborate house costume. Her white hands were loaded with glittering rings; the tiny watch and other chatelaine adornments suspended from her waist were also gem encrusted. She had pinned upon the breast of her gown no less than five brooches—all emblematical in design and significance.

As the Honorable Gerald looked at her the young lady returned the attention, and then, without any stumbling or hesitation, said in a kindly voice, which had neither diffidence nor boldness in its make-up:

“You had better come and sit down here, and you, too, John” (speaking to the bell-boy), “for it is evident, from what the engineer says, that it will take him some time to get us out.”

The bell-boy and the son of the great English lord obeyed her behest, and thus

she sat in the semi-twilight between them.

"I think," she continued, pleasantly, "that all three of us have nobody to blame but ourselves for the predicament we are in, for whoever, with a grain of sense in his entire composition, would think of getting into an elevator when the man that runs it was not at the rope? Of course nobody will say anything to us (she nodded toward Gerald), but John will suffer; poor John!"

John hastened to disclaim this assertion.

"No, I won't neither, miss," he said, confidently; "the clerk didn't see you get in, but he seen the gentleman, and he told me to run and fetch him out, and before I could get to the words we was a-flying."

The young lady laughed. "Oh, you were both so funny!" she said, with a perfect impartiality of mention. "John crossed himself and said his prayers, and you (to Gerald) began jumping at the iron gate and pulling at it and going through such a series of antics that I couldn't help thinking of the monkeys in Lincoln Park."

John grinned and the Honorable Gerald paled and flushed, then grew indignantly

rigid, and looked anywhere and everywhere but at the pretty, rude young woman; but she seemed quite unconscious of having been impolite, quite unconscious of the Honorable Gerald's haughty attitude. She seemed to have entirely forgotten that he was in the car.

"Now, miss," said John, "weren't you a bit afraid?"

"Afraid!" said the small woman. "No; it was too quick, and unusual, too novel, and thrilling, and funny, and besides I knew it was a good elevator and well put in and carefully looked after. You know, John, father is a machinist by trade, and he has never lost his interest in anything of the sort, so, as he has many a time for want of a better listener, explained all the ins and outs of this particular elevator's working to me, when it flew up I just supposed that the engineer was trying it, and I don't doubt but that we should have been all right if you had left the lever alone."

"I am afraid that is so, miss," said John, submissively. "I wonder will they ever know that I done it? I would lose my place if they did, and I have a widowed mother, miss, and some brothers to help."

"A widowed mother!" With an energy and enthusiasm better witnessed than described the young lady whipped out a note-book and pencil from her pocket.

"Yes, miss, a widowed mother."

"Name and address, John?"

John gave it with rather a puzzled and anxious expression. Was she going to tell his mother about the lever or what?

"Age (if you know it) and occupation (if any)."

"She was born," said John, slowly, "in the County Cork in 1852—"

"There, there, John, that's enough," said the young lady, shaking her pencil and making a severe wrinkle between her eyes.

"She is a washerwoman, and a devout member of Father Kelley's church. John, now listen. You go to confession the first day you get an hour off, and you tell Father Kelley all about the lever—that will forgive you the sin, and at the same time take it off our consciences, and we won't tell of him, will we?" She leaned forward and put this pleading question directly to the Honorable Gerald.

He forgot that he had been angry with

her as he hastened to answer: "Of course not; most certainly not. Let's you and I promise the boy that we'll be mum, and if the lever is insisted on, why I will take the blame," and so they made their everlasting peace.

"Are you staying in Chicago?" she asked.

He explained his intention of leaving it, if not to-night, by the earliest possible train in the morning.

"Oh, you must not do anything of the kind," she said, earnestly, "for really there is no place like it in the world. Of course, if you have just come from New York, you are under the impression that it's a smoky, noisy city, menaced continually by Anarchists and the Clan-na-Gael. Of course there are a few of them here. We couldn't with any sort of decency ask New York to keep all the disreputable element. We are willing to do our share of home missionary work. Oh, I've heard Eastern people talk about us. They say we shoot off our R's like fire-crackers—that our women are all feet!

"When a Western girl goes East in summer this is about what they say of her: 'Oh, yes, that is Flora McFlimsey, from

Chicago. She represents millions made out of pork, or lard, or the Stock Yards,' and they assume an expression of the nostrils that suggests Bridgeport to a Chicagoan, and all the same I would just as leave have a pig rampant on my coat-of-arms as a wild boar, now wouldn't you?"

Oh, if my lady could have heard the Honorable Gerald reply—if the twins could have heard him say: "Oh, yes, of course I would. A wild hog and a tame pig are brothers, you know," and he beamed and gleamed as though he felt a glow of sterling satisfaction with himself.

"Now, what I love Chicago principally for," said the witching girl, changing her smile into a subdued expression that hid one dimple and left the other but a faint, shadowy thing, "are our women's clubs; they open for us such unlimited vistas of thought." Then she sat very still and looked into space.

"I suppose," said Gerald, "since you admire literary women's clubs so much, that you must belong to one of them?"

"One!" she said, scornfully; "one! Why, I belong to ten! I am not mentally capable

of doing much, so I confine myself to such introductory thoughts as may in time broaden my intellectual horizon.

"On Mondays I attend a united study class. Our subjects are light, although not in the least frivolous. The subjects we have discussed since we opened in October are: 'What Does Economic Science Mean, and How is it Relegated to Modern Life?' 'Ethics and Taxation,' 'Democratizing Industry,' and 'Capitalism Triumphant.' Next week I am to lead the topic—the subject, 'The Climax of Individualism.' "

"You must be awfully clever," he burst out. "One wouldn't think it to look at you."

Instead of taking offense, she laughed as though quite agreeing with his sentiments.

"When they first gave the subject to me," she said, "I was frightened to death; but it would never have done to have declined, and really there isn't a bit of trouble about it. First go to an unabridged dictionary (if it's an old-fashioned one, so much the better) and look up the leading words of your subject. Give their roots and derivations, and look indifferent and blasé if there

are any dead language pronunciations to reveal. Then look up these same leading words in a book of familiar quotations, and the mustier and more remote the saying and the man who said it, the more your audience will account it to you for brilliancy. Then go to the Newberry Library and ask the attendant there to lend you his or her brains and give you pointers on books and papers that treat of what you want to know. Copy off indiscriminately thirty or forty lines here and there and everywhere, and then go home and put them together.

“I find that the papers that elicit my most ardent admiration are the perfectly unintelligible ones. All intellectual atmosphere, you know, and no comprehension. They must, of course, differentiate a great deal. (That word always makes me feel crushed and small. I’ve put it in five times in my paper.)

“But I must tell you about the other clubs. The Millais Art Club meets on Tuesdays. We’ve done an enormous amount of work among the old masters, and now we are doing the symbolistic and impressionist schools together, because there are

such quantities about both of them that we find it best to, as father says (father isn't cultured), 'change off.'

"On Wednesday comes the kindergarten study. Dear me! whatever did our grandmothers and our mothers do without Froebel? My grandmother (who was born in New England) says they used common sense, the Westminster Catechism, and birch rods. What an awful contrast to the dear games and plays? As I have told grandmother often, if I have twenty-five children, they shall all go to kindergarten, the dear, sweet things.

"Well, on Thursday we meet to discuss civic things. Oh, it is so interesting to hear the girls tell how they would conduct this great city if once the ballot was put into their hands. They never will believe that they wouldn't be able to recreate Chicago, and, in fact, the whole United States, until they have been allowed to try, and I for one wish Illinois would grant us State suffrage, and by so doing settle the matter.

"On Fridays we are patriotic. We are Colonial Dames and Daughters of the American Revolution. The field we are

supposed to sow in is broad, our objects of organization are grand, but as yet we have, in the main spent eleven months in every year in arranging for the next year's election, and having receptions, and wearing our best clothes. And then there are little unimportant but pleasant clubs that we all belong to—'girls' friendly societies,' and 'sewing schools,' and 'cooking schools,' and 'musical clubs.' I think settlement sewing schools are the most fun. Lots of the children come from awful homes, filled with microbe germs that haven't even been discovered yet, and you are always wondering what sort of an unseen monster you are carrying back to present to the bosom of your family. Oh, I think microbes are so fascinating, don't you?"

"And," said the young Englishman, unable to keep silence and breaking in upon the current of her narrative, "do you never long for society? At your age it seems rather sad for a girl to go in exclusively for this sort of thing."

"Go into society! Why, what made you think I didn't? I'm simply devoted to it. Last week I went to five coming-out teas,

three breakfasts, two luncheons, a matinee musicale, three dances, a theatre party, and four dinners. Why, what are you staring at? Is there anything remarkable in a girl's having a good time?"

"No, no! of course not," said the young man, slowly. "Only I should think you would be dead. I don't see where you get the physical endurance to stand it."

"Oh, that's easily explained. I row and play golf and tennis from May to October. I—I—"

Her dimples fled, utterly fled! Her smile became a memory. She sprang upon the seat with one piercing little feminine shriek. "Don't let it climb up here!" she cried, and forgetting the time and peculiar circumstance, she put her hands through the Honorable Gerald's arm, and clung to him piteously, imploring him not, oh! not to let it climb up, for it was "one of those long-whiskered ones that wiggle their noses so awfully."

Then she cried: "John! oh, John! catch it!"

With one fell swoop the valiant John cornered the tiny quivering little gray

mouse, and all unconscious of the depravity of his action, he held out his wriggling prey at arm's length by the tail.

No scream issued from the firm lips of the girl, no longer a look of terror penetrated the sweet gray eyes! For the modern Minerva had fainted, and was lying prettily unconscious in the willing arms of the Honorable Gerald. And all this rambling talk has been introduced in order to explain how it came to be that Gerald's marriage and Gerald's American wife had come with the force of an exploding bomb into this old-fashioned English home.

CHAPTER XVI.

The birthday dinner at Glen Hall was in progress, and never had the old room looked more beautiful than it did on this early spring evening, decked out with flowers and tropical plants, all in honor of the gentle spirit who represented in herself the dearest and the best attributes of wifhood and motherhood.

Besides the husband, daughters, sons and sons' wives gathered around the board, there was the rector and the rector's wife, and a godson and nephew of Lady Blankshire's, the Honorable Mr. Harcourt Vane, a gentleman of large landed estate, who, to while away his unincumbered leisure, had cultivated a taste for mildly "going into things," from which he was constantly emerging with various and varied results.

Quite on in the dinner there was a pause in the ripple of small talk, and my lord, turning to the Honorable Harcourt Vane,

said: "And how is the ramie grass product doing, Harcourt?"

"Oh," said the honorable gentleman addressed, "it is going, sir, going," leaving it to be decided by his hearers whether it was going up like a rocket or down like a stick.

"Speaking of the ramie grass product," he proceeded, "reminds me of rather an interesting experience I had not long since. I know a man in Ploverlie, a grandson of old Wiggins, the brewer—his name is Mackirby.

"Mackirby and I were in college together—that is, I entered in his last year, and I happened to fag for him. He went into business, the cotton business in America; lived there a good many years in a state of single blessedness, and then, madame," bowing to the bride, "was fortunate enough to win the heart and hand of a very beautiful Yankee girl. I happened to be traveling in the States just at that time, so he asked me to be best man. Shortly after his marriage, Mackirby came back to England, and established himself in the cotton business in Ploverlie. Now, it occurred to me that Mackirby might be a good man to

be interested in my 'ramie grass product.' So I made him a call at his office. He seemed very much interested in what I had to say, and examined my exhibit carefully, and then he said: 'Vane, I don't wish to pry into your secrets concerning the process of manufacture of this product, but tell me one of the most powerful and distinctive ingredients.' I thought a moment, and then I said: 'Why, I should think I might name arsenic as the most necessary, for it is very largely employed.' 'Oh, is it!' says Mackirby. 'What a wonderful thing arsenic is! Have you never heard, Vane,' said he, 'that in certain parts of the world people take arsenic not only as a tonic, but as a condiment with their food as freely as we take pepper or sauces and,' he added, 'thrive upon it?' I said that I had heard of such uses of poison, but that I could not bring myself to believe it any more than I could believe that De Quincey took nine hundred drops of laudanum a day. Mackirby laughed. 'There is more truth than fiction in the old proverb that "What is one man's poison is another man's meat." Now,' said Mackirby, 'I am going to tell you some-

thing that will stagger you. There is, Vane, a so-called poison which keeps me strong and well. When I am weak or weary or down-hearted I take it, and presto! I am myself again. This poison is arsenic. When I lived in America I had far less trouble in getting it, and if it were not for an intimate friend of my brother's, who has what the Americans call "a pull" in certain quarters, I should have died for lack of the only stimulant that builds me up. Now,' he continued, 'since you use arsenic, can't you get me some?' I said 'All right,' that I would; that I had been able to secure quite a lot for certain experiments which were now finished, so that I had no further use for what was left, and that he was more than welcome to it.

"You never can imagine a man more delighted. He offered to pay me anything that I cared to ask for it, but I told him that I had no license to sell drugs and I promised to bring it to him."

"But you never did!" The bride, Gerald's bride, had broken in upon his recital; her face was a little pale, and her eyes full of astonished reproach.

Mr. Vane laughed lightly. "Yes, indeed, I did," he said. "I took it to him a week ago. There were one hundred and fifty grains in all. Some of it was white and some black arsenic. It was in two packages, but I assure you, Mrs. Blankshire, I warned him to be careful. I said to him, 'Mackirby, you have almost enough poison by you to kill a regiment!' He said he realized that, and that he should take it home and hide it away in a place only known to himself and perhaps his brother, to whom he confided everything. He said it would never do to let his wife suspect his having it, as she wouldn't give him a minute's peace until it was out of the house.

"Well, I think it was simply awful of you!" It was young Mrs. Gerald again. "There is no excuse for you whatever! I should consider that I was doing a less vicious thing if I made Xmas presents of loaded revolvers and bowie knives to the inmates of Elgin, Kankakee and poor distressed Dunning—our lunatic asylums at home—as for you, an intelligent man, to give even one grain of arsenic to that Mr. Mackirby."

The silence was breathless, for this was the first inning of advanced womanhood under the Glen Hall rooftree.

“That man,” she continued; “have you stopped to consider what he will do? He will and he has carried that dreadful death-dealing stuff home! He will hide it somewhere, of course, where nobody but his brother—I feel sure his brother is horrid—and himself knows anything about it. Well, this arsenic fiend will get reckless some day, and take an overdose, and he will die. And the coroner will be called. Of course, the verdict will be death by poison, and then this arsenic will come to light. I don’t know how, but it will. And if the brother don’t tell, and you don’t tell, a victim may be looked for to lay all the blame upon, for no one will believe the man did it himself.

“Now, what you ought to do is to go straight to that man’s wife, and tell her all about it; and if you don’t I shall never, never like you as long as I live!”

Mrs. Gerald was so little and so childish looking, and so more than lovely, that the big Englishman beside her was only amused, and the rest were entertained. It

was so novel! So bright! And fortunately there was no one but the family present—for the rector was a cousin, too.

But the bride would not accept their light view of the matter, and she turned appealingly to her father-in-law.

"You who are so wise," she said, "you who have been a student of life for so many years, you know that Mr. Vane did wrong to give that unnatural man all that arsenic, don't you?"

And everybody said afterward "How touching it was," "How it must have appealed to Gerald to have the stern, unbending old statesman say gently to his newest daughter-in-law: 'Yes, my dear, I quite agree with you; I quite agree with you.'"

CHAPTER XVII.

Richard or Dick Mackirby, as we have said, had an intense love for horses. Let it be added in justice to the young man that this fondness extended to children and to dogs. Probably next to their own mother, whom they adored, nobody was so dear to the little Mackirby girls as "Uncle Dick." This naturally made Richard a frequent guest at his brother's house, and gave him opportunity, had he so desired it, to make himself conversant with all the goings and comings in Charnley Street. What it had given him was a feeling of real affection for his brother's young wife.

Perhaps Dick was like many silent and outwardly unemotional people, a keen observer of human nature. At all events, as we have said, he lounged about his brother's house, smoked his brother's cigars, and generally made himself at home, and he rarely went away without paying a visit to the nursery or the schoolroom.

If the mother happened to be with her children, it did not prevent Dick's staying as long as it pleased him to do so, for she always had a kindly, courteous welcome for "Uncle Dick." Madame Mackirby and Frederick Mackirby hailed Richard's attitude with undisguised approbation. They agreed together that dear, silent Dick was deeper than he seemed; that he was gathering evidence against the squaw to be handed over in the family interest when William was dead and it became necessary to show cause why the Mackirbys should control the disbursement of much of the American woman's large income; but for some reason, perhaps they themselves could not have told why, they never alluded to this matter of Richard's visits in their conversations with Richard. They contented themselves with hearing about them through Mrs. Mackirby's maid—a paid spy, in Frederick Mackirby's employ.

It was on a blustery, gusty afternoon, full of shower and shine, that Dick Mackirby mounting the stairs of the Charnley Street house, came unannounced into the school-room, to find his sister-in-law and the little

girls gathered close together, all intently interested in the contents of a small box Mrs. Mackirby held in her hand.

"Oh, Uncle Dick," cried Marion, jumping up from her knees and running to meet him, "I am so glad that you have come, mother is talking to us about her grandfather. He was such a delightful man, and he used to tell her such beautiful stories. When we ask mother about great-grandfather, she always gets out the watch-charm he used to wear, for she says when she looks at it it brings back the stories he used to tell her. Esther and I call it the magic charm. We pretend we think if we wished anything on it it would come true."

Mrs. Mackirby raised her head and nodded and smiled to the newcomer. "Do come and see this wonderful charm," she said, gently. She was always gentle, always painfully quiet in manner of late years. "It is really a Masonic charm, or emblem, that belonged to grandfather, and his father before him. My father's family were intensely devout Masons. For three or four generations they had reached what I believe

is the most exalted rank—the thirty-second degree. This, of course, is just the ordinary Master Mason insignia, with its jeweled cross and crown, and there being no male heir, after my father's death, it came to me."

Dick leaned forward, took the charm from the box, and held it in his hand. "I have never heard you mention this fact before," he said. "It would have interested me, and does interest me, for I am a Mason. I am more interested in Masonry than anything else, and I have taken this degree," and he looked down again at the glittering bauble in the palm of his hand.

"When I was a little girl," said Mrs. Mackirby, addressing the children, "my grandfather, as I have often told you, used to wear this charm on his watch-chain, and it always had a wonderful fascination for me; and I used to climb onto his lap, and take the emblem in my small fingers and look at it, and then ask questions; and finally grandpapa would take off his spectacles, and lay down his paper, and proceed to gratify my request.

" 'Oh, please do tell me, grandpa, what the Masons can do for one another.'

“Of course, he had a great many interesting and touching incidents to tell, but he knew which two I liked best, and so, no matter how many others he told me, my pet stories were always included. The first was about a man who was captured in mid-ocean by pirates, and how one day, while he was working up among the sails, he saw a ship in the distance, but quite near enough to discern the figures on her deck, and he gave a Masonic sign, and the Masons on the other ship knew that there was a brother in trouble, so they came and rescued him, and took him home to his wife and his little children.

“The other story was about an American soldier in the War of the Revolution. He was captured by the British and condemned to be instantly shot as a spy. The poor man was not a spy at all. He had been sent with a flag of truce and a message into the enemies' ranks; but some bad men had met him on his way and robbed him of his passports. He tried to make them believe this, told them all he asked was to have them hold him a prisoner until they could send

someone to his general to find out if he was not telling the truth. But the men would not listen to anything he said, and just as the rope was being put around his neck, another British officer rode up, and the man made a Masonic sign to him, and the officer stopped the execution, and the man's innocence was soon proved.

"Then I used to say: 'Dear me, grandpa, I wish I could be a Mason,' and he would shake his head and say sadly: 'When the Lord took that rib out of Adam he converted the vacancy into a pouch for man to keep his secrets in.' "

"But I used to say, 'Wasn't there ever a woman or a little girl that found out?' and then grandpa would say, 'Now, little Bonnie, I am going to tell you all about it; breathe softly and as seldom as you can, so you won't miss a single word.'

" 'Once upon a time there lived in a great castle in Scotland a gentleman of title who was grandmaster of a Masonic body, and as the homes of the men who belonged to this lodge surrounded the castle on all sides, a lodge-room was fitted up in the grand-

master's own house. Now, this grandmaster had a dear little granddaughter, his only son's only child; and instead of her having been born with a silver spoon in her mouth, what do you think the doctor and the nurse did find? Why a large interrogation mark! The first thing she ever said was 'Ah ta,' which being interpreted by her mother, who understood the 'Ah-goo' language, proved to be 'What's that?' "

" 'Oh, grandpapa!' I used to cry out, 'that is just exactly what I used to say when I was a baby! Isn't it funny that the princess should have said it, too?'

" 'Well,' grandpa would continue, 'this little princess, as you call her—and by the way her name was Bonnie, too! Yes, it was! If you don't believe me, go and look in Webster's Dictionary—this Bonnie, I say, kept on asking questions. She "wanted to know" and she "wanted to see" from one day's end to the other, until she might just as well as not have been the heroine of the piece that my grandmother gave me a silver six-pence for committing to memory when I wore pinafores! It was about—

“Matilda, who was a pleasant child,
But one bad trick she had,
That e’en when all around her smiled,
Oft made her friends feel sad.

And how—

“Sometimes she’d lift the tea-pot lid,
To peep at what was in it,
Or tilt the kettle if you did
But turn your head a minute!”

“ ‘This conduct, Bonnie, resulted in a
severe switching—

“And then while smarting with the pain
From birch-rod, sick and sore,
Matilda promised to refrain
From meddling any more.”

“Or, grandpapa would add, ‘From asking
questions.’

“But I would say, putting my arms coax-
ingly round his neck, and laying my face
against his: ‘What about the little girl in
the castle? Did she do like Bluebeard’s
wife? Did she unlock the door and peep in?
And did they catch her? And——’

“But grandpa would look very, very
wise, and shaking his white head gravely,
he would say, ‘To be continued in our next,

Bonnie,' but our next never came, for grandpa always continued it until he died."

"Mother," said Esther, "I should like to recite to Uncle Dick that beautiful piece of poetry that your grandfather taught you."

"Oh, do let her, mother!" pleaded Marion. "It is so lovely! Pray do!" So gaining consent, the little elocutionist rose, walked to the center of the schoolroom and made her bow, and repeated in her sweet, earnest child voice:

Why, Phœbe, are you come so soon?

Where are your berries, child?

When the long piece was finished, little Esther paused. "I think," said Marion, with a perfect imitation of her superiors in age who discuss literature, "that the Blackberry Girl is one of the cleverest of stories. We like it so much that sometimes I say it to Esther, and then she says it to me."

Just at this juncture Elizabeth appeared. "Miss Starling, the dressmaker is here, m'am," she said, "to take your measure for your new dinner dress." "Very well; go down and tell her that I shall be there presently." Mrs. Mackirby then gave some directions to Parks, the nurse, but seeing

Richard turn to go, she called to him to wait for her as she had something to say to him, and when she had finished her instructions to Parks, she joined him and they walked through the hall together. She had the little jewel-box in one of her hands; she laid the other hand on his arm. "Dick," she said, "I want to know if you will accept this Masonic trinket in trust for Marion until she grows up. I should like very much if you would wear it. You have always been kind and friendly to me, and I am fond of you. Only, Dick, if you do care to take it and wear it, do not let anyone know from whom you got it."

He took the box from her hand. "You are very good," he said, "and I will accept your offer, and it shall come safely into Marion's hands when she is of age. And let me assure you that I am, and always have been, your friend. I am sorry to be forced to say that both my mother and Frederick dislike you. For this reason it has seemed best to me to take a negative position; to say nothing for or against you; to listen and to be silent."

"Then, Dick," she said earnestly, "you do not believe that I have been flirting with Jack Thornely, do you? You surely do not, Dick?"

"No," he said, "I do not, for I have made it my business to find out the truth of that matter; and listen, Bonnie, irritable and unreasonable as William often is, much as he seems to like to hurt and perhaps, so far as words go, abuse you, he holds you in the highest respect, and nothing that Frederick or anyone else could say to him would make him believe the contrary. I do not see what Frederick can say or do that can hurt you now or hereafter. But be careful in all that you do or say before Elizabeth, for it is all repeated, probably with many additions, at our house. Remember, that if at any time I can serve you, you must not fail to call upon me. Remember, I am always at your command."

Then they reached the door of her room, they said an indifferent good-by in the presence of the watchful Elizabeth, and parted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Craigie Glen.

“My own dear Nell:

“I wonder if you and the entire family at home enjoy getting my letters as much as I love writing them? You will see by the heading of this epistle that I have temporarily abdicated from Glen Hall, and am with Bettie. Dear me! When Bettie and I used to sit in our own room at Ogontz—

“In robes of white, prettiest nightgowns under the
sun,
Stockingless, slipperless, sit in the night when (our
boarding-school) revel was done,
Sit and talk of waltz and quadrille, gallop and glide,
like other girls
Who over the fire, when all is still, comb out their
braids and curls.”

“We never dreamed what fate had in store for us. Bettie had decided to marry an out-and-out cowboy on her own Western frontier! She scorned civilized life as a miserable husk and wretched sham! She

proposed to ride up and down cañons, shooting off pistols and killing wild things while she was young, and she arranged to die when her first gray hair appeared! And I used to think if I could only be a second Susan B. Anthony I should reach the highest zenith of my ambition. And now Bettie is a duchess, and she has a young duke and a little dukeling, and a brace of castles, which—to do her credit—she has ‘done over’ with excellent taste. And I am the Honorable Mrs. Gerald Blankshire while I’m on my wedding visit in England. We will leave the ‘honorable’ in father-in-law’s safe when we start for home.

“But I know you are all dying to hear about Bettie. Well to begin with, Bettie belongs to what is called ‘the smart set’ over here, which means a good many things that would never be even dreamed of at father-in-law’s! Bettie’s duke is comparatively new to his honors—not more than three or four hundred years old! Father-in-law dates back to thirteen hundred and something, and a king and a battlefield—I’m going to look it up some day. When Bettie wrote and begged me to come and make her a

visit, I could see that the twins looked blushey, and that father-in-law and mother-in-law didn't approve; but of course I accepted, and then Gerald fell ill with something that his mother called a 'malarial condition,' which didn't affect his energy or his appetite, but which rendered it necessary for me to go alone with my maid.

"We arrived at the little way station just at twilight, and there was a closed carriage waiting for me and some sort of an open wagon for Martha and my luggage. And then we drove and bumped and drove along a muddy, uninteresting road for five or six miles, so of course it was pitch dark when we arrived—for Martha followed right behind with the luggage, as if for all the world I were the hearse and she was the funeral!

"I suppose I might as well describe the exterior of Craigie Glen before we go on. It isn't one of the castles, it's just 'a place.' The house is a protracted affair, two stories and a half high. Of course, it's Elizabethan! It occurs to me that architecture as a profession must have starved to death previous to this era, and been mendicants ever since; for every house I have

seen or have heard mentioned is Elizabethan. But Bettie's house is "fetching." There are any number of bewildering wings and protruding casements and little-paned windows on hinges, and doors that open and shut in the middle, and such lots of Virginia creeper that it makes me feel homesick!

"Well, when I got to Bettie's door it was thrown open by a footman. I don't mean, Nell, anything like those promoted hotel waiters that we see walking through footmen's parts in Chicago. These English footmen are born so, not made to fit an occasion of wealth or pomp or circumstance. They have not a particle of expression; they only move at their joints, and their speech has all the charm that a mechanical doll has when you pull a string and it says 'Mama.'

"First, you enter a great hall with a lot of armor on the walls; but I am used to armor, father-in-law has enough to stock a museum with. But I didn't have much time to look around, for I heard a well-known voice crying: 'Oh, Nan! Nan!' and a pair of arms were around my neck, and my arms were around Bettie's neck, and we were looking at each other with quivering lips and real

old-fashioned American school-girl tears running down our cheeks. The footman never moved, and unless he had eyes in the back of his head, he never saw our weeps, but he must have heard them, they were so genuine and unrestrained.

"Bettie looked just the same, only a trifle stouter. 'You dear old Nan,' she said, hugging me again, 'I am so glad to have you first all alone by myself; the others are in the ballroom playing what we would call in America, "tag." So come and have some tea before we go to dress for dinner.' Then she took her arm and wound it round my waist. 'It seems so good to see you, Nan,' she said, 'and we must have lots of talks together—you and I—about people and things in the dear home land over yonder, mustn't we, Nan?'

"Out of the big hall she led me, and into a little one with a stone floor. Then we turned a corner and went into another narrow hall, and then up some steps, and so at last to a cosy sitting-room—mother would never stay in this house five minutes; it gives you the impression of being impossible to get out of in case of fire.

“The room we now entered was so cosy and quaint, it looked just like those you see in colonial Virginia houses. There was a glorious fire on the andirons—no asbestos logs!—that make you shiver, not only with cold but with thoughts of the next month’s gas bill. And I did feel happy sitting in one of the big, soft, cushiony chairs, with Bettie in just such another soft cushiony one, sipping our tea, and all the while we were sitting tête-à-tête the strangest series of sounds were greeting my ears. It occurred to me, among other mental solutions that some back portion of the mansion had tumbled in, engulfing a multitude of shrieking servants in its ruins. But I dismissed this suggestion, as Bettie, who is not in the least deaf, took it placidly and without comment.

“Finally, I couldn’t stand it any longer, and I said: ‘I suppose a haunted chamber is the correct thing to have in an Elizabethan house, particularly now that they say that Queen Bess has taken to walking, but I really should, Bettie, insist upon my ghosts making less noise. I thought at first that a part of your house that you hadn’t gotten round to repairing yet had tumbled in, but

you couldn't sit unmoved sipping your tea if it was anything like that that was creating a yelling pandemonium. It must be the lively Elizabeth at skittles or broad sword exercise, or something of the sort!

"Bettie laughed, and she said, 'Oh, dear, dear old Nan! Just the same as ever! Not an R softened! Not a bit of wit and brightness gone! And to think,' she said, slowly—it seemed to me sadly—'that all this fine humor should be lost on an Englishman!' Then we both said nothing for a little while. I suppose she was casting a wistful look back upon her ideal cowboy; I know I thought of Miss Anthony.

"And finally she said—and if you will believe me, she was as solemn as possible, there wasn't a grain of mirth in her voice, there wasn't a twinkle of it in her eyes—'I think I told you, Nan, that my house party were playing tag.'

" 'Oh,' I said, 'I see. I understand now that you explain it to me! But mother-in-law's guests don't play "tag" at Glen Hall. They don't play anything, in fact, but whist and the piano.'

" 'House tag is rather noisy,' said Bettie,

'and it breaks the furniture in the music-room and when they jump on and off the billiard table too much it isn't good for it. So I rather suggest, so far as I may, the ball-room. They are up there now. But the floor is so slippery—we had it waxed yesterday for a dance last night—that I am afraid they are falling a good deal. But here they come!'

"And into the room they flocked—'my ladies' and 'my lords,' 'honorable misses' and 'honorable misters,' and some American men and women who had gotten themselves up to look English, but to be truthfully and expressively slangy, hadn't caught on yet, and like Peter of old, everything from the crown of their heads to the soles of their feet betrayed them. Well, tell grandmother they all looked like those people that used to dress up and ride about on horseback on Thanksgiving days long ago, when I was a little girl, and used to go and visit grandmother in the East—those people that called themselves 'ragamuffins.'

"The men's hair was all tousled, and those that didn't have their neckties untied or off, had them bowed under their ears or at the

back of their necks; the ladies all looked like 'Madge Wildfires,' but they exclaimed in chorus that they 'had been having no end of a good time! Jolly fun, you know!' The men looked at me en passant; the women overlooked me altogether until I was presented. Then they were all civil and pleasant except the American women, whose icy glares and stares were delightfully funny experiences.

"Bettie had told me that these two products of mining speculations had recently been presented at court. If bending over the queen's hand has such a freezing effect, I am glad I have not had the honor.

"Father-in-law's guests are never frowsy or draggled. They keep themselves in their own apartments when not on dress parade.

"I have seen a great deal of Bettie's dear little addle-headed duke. How a girl of her brains and beauty and sense ever came to marry such an it in pantaloons I don't see! But Bettie is true; she has taken him for better or for worse, and she makes the best she can of him; and he adores her, and why shouldn't he? She takes such good care of him!

"I shall be glad to go back to Glen Hall, not that I don't love Bettie; but I think Gerald was right in getting malaria and staying at home. The atmosphere here is not sweet and pure, and everything is conducted on such a different scale of morals and manners. The dinners, for instance, are very unlike the stately, ceremonious feasts at father-in-law's. They are exquisitely served and provided, but there are a great many things discussed besides politics, flower shows and religion. Some of the things they talk about would bring crimson blushes to the cheeks of Number Eleven!

"But Bettie is a duchess, and on state occasions she wears a coronet of golden strawberry leaves. And over the water you and I and everybody else clutch every item of news the papers give concerning her. I like Bettie best, and I think she likes herself best, when she is up in the nursery sitting in a little plain, every-day American rocking-chair, feeding her baby from her breast, holding him close and telling him sweet, simple nothings that make him stop and look up into her face to smile and coo. These are the times that Bettie and I have

our best talks, and they are always about home—our America, our motherland.

“Before I close I want you to know that the Honorable Mr. Vane, who presented all that arsenic to the arsenic eater in Ploverlie, has gone off on a voyage to the antipodes. He sent me word by Gerald that he really hadn’t had time to see the man’s wife, as I asked him to. I wish he had taken that arsenic with him.

Nan.”

CHAPTER XIX.

Young Mrs. Mackirby had been to a luncheon, and the absorbing topic of conversation had been "Malchias," the palmist, whose art, it was generally conceded, was simply preternatural.

So strongly had Mrs. Mackirby been impressed by what she heard that she decided to go to him on her way home and personally test his skill. A servant in Oriental costume opened the door and bowed her into an apartment from which all natural light had been excluded—a room that was Eastern in all its accessories and furnishings. She seated herself upon a divan, and laid upon the salver presented by the servant the golden fee required by the palmist. It was not many minutes before into the room came a tall, fair, well-dressed gentleman, whose excellent English left one questioning why he introduced so conspicuously Persian hangings and costly Indian shawls and the odor of sandalwood into his apart-

ments' make-up. "May I see your hands?" he said, bowing slightly. She drew off her gloves and held them palm up before him.

He took first one and then the other in his own hands, then he took them both together, but he uttered no word, and she fancied that his hands shook. At last, after what seemed an inexcusable silence, he spoke: "I shall have to beg you," he said slowly, "to receive back the fee, for I find myself unable to read your hand."

She was such an unusually gentle, quiet-looking woman that he was unprepared for the penetration displayed in her reply.

"You mean," she said, "that you read in my hands that which you do not wish to tell me. If it has been given you to know much that is withheld from the majority of human kind, you must have it in your power to be most helpful. For example, if you read in my hand anything that shows you that sorrow or trouble is coming to be my portion, do you think it would be right to withhold it?"

"I am quite alone in the world—that is, I have no father, mother, brothers or sisters. There is no one in England who cares for me

or my interest. I have three children, but they are part of myself. Individually, I think I care little for anything, and fearless. But these children are all girls. They will be women by and by, and I do not want any sorrow to come into their lives through me. So I am sure you will read my hand, and tell me all that its lines show to you, and please believe that I am neither a physical nor a moral coward."

She looked at Malchias, and he looked at her. "As you will," he said finally, and added: "I think you are right; you should know. It is always best for the strong in soul to be forewarned or prepared to meet the inevitable. I think that you should know."

He then studied her hands carefully over and over again. At last he said: "You were born and reared in a large town or small city by the sea. You married through and by the suggestion of others a man much older than yourself. You seem to have been very young, little more than a child. You had in youth a fine constitution and great recuperative powers. The only shock to such splendid physical construction

as yours that could have been possible, then, would have come through some sorrow, disappointment or perhaps physical abuse. So delicate, so fine was, and is, this mental make-up, that any abuse too long resorted to could have but one result, one outcome; it would be a species of helplessness, a mind paralysis.

"Your husband is feeble, it would seem to be, through some sort of intemperance. This condition increases rapidly; it will, before long, cause his death. You have incurred the dislike of some woman, on whom you have conferred many favors, but these will all be forgotten by her if any opportunity occurs in which she may do you injury. There is a man who is planning and plotting night and day to make you the instrument by which he shall be enabled to carry out his selfish, vicious and contemptible purposes.

"I am afraid I cannot show you that anything which you might now do would avert that which is soon to come to you, which is predestined; but I would advise you, if you have any man friend who exerts a powerful public influence, to tell him of this visit to

me. He may laugh at what you relate to him concerning our conversation to-day, but he will appreciate my foresight in some near-at-hand to-morrow."

He took her hand again, and studied it thoughtfully. He grew white and faint. She felt an intense sense of gratitude to this stranger whom she knew was moving the heavens and the earth to help her in what he believed her hour of need.

At last he said "Thank God!" He looked up into her face, and the drops of sweat stood upon his broad forehead, and he breathed like one who has been running hard and fast. "There is hope at least against the greatest shame that is threatening you! Take the old ring that you wear on a chain about your neck—it is a Masonic ring, a very old one—and send it to the man who has its mate. Send it to-day. Within an hour let it be on its way. There is no time to lose. You are surrounded by spies, you are so hedged in, as it were, that it almost seems even now a pitiful hoping against hope. However, dismiss your carriage and walk home. Turn into Rosebush Street, and the man whom fate sends to

meet and to greet you is the one to whom you may freely intrust your ring, by whom you may safely send your message. God be with you!" he said, and then dropped her hand, and was silent.

She bent her head in a wordless good-by and passed out, and the palmist threw himself upon the divan, face downward, and prayed for her.

CHAPTER XX.

The April day had lengthened into late afternoon. A cool breeze was coming up from the sea, and it set the branches swaying and the young leaves rustling all along the tree-shaded street.

The sparrows were gathering in little groups, as sparrows have a way of doing toward sundown, and they were chattering in noisy, quarrelsome fashion.

Young Mrs. Mackirby walked slowly along Rosebush Street; she looked such a peaceful, quiet bit of womankind. If one had felt her pulse or listened to the beating of her heart, the rhythm would have been found to be normal; but had one who made a life study of the human mind looked into Bonnie Mackirby's face, he would have found opportunity for interesting research and conclusion.

Bonnie Mackirby was one of those women who, without being startlingly beautiful, was

noticeably attractive. Her head was nobly shaped, its development symmetrical. Her forehead was full at the dome, a trifle less so at the eyebrows, as one is apt to find it where the eyes are large and deep set. She had a beautiful nose, neither large nor small, decidedly Grecian in its contour; the nostrils were fine and thin and sensitive, suggesting spirit and quick intelligence. It was the mouth that gave the student the most positive clew to this individual bit of human history. The mouth had never lost the symmetry of its early perfection in both color and shape. At sixteen it had been a Cupid's bow, a laughing mouth, showing the beautiful, firm, white teeth, but at six-and-twenty time and circumstance had dried up all the springs of mirth, and it had come to be that the still red lips found nothing mirthful in life, and, knowing nothing but bondage, only smiled now at the bidding of the will—a smile so piteous and yet so sweet that it was like the wraiths we women cherish of our bridal roses. She wore her heavy auburn hair drawn back from her brow, and its wealth was twisted into a coil at her head's crown—her queenly little

head that held itself so regally that made her seem to others just what she was, a gentlewoman.

Emerson tells us that "all the angels that inhabit the temple of the body appear at the windows."

From young Mrs. Mackirby's eyes looked out not angels, but ghosts, the ghost of a disillusioned youth, the ghost of disappointed hopes, the ghost of a wronged womanhood, but oftenest there came the spirit of an almost-spent endurance—an apathy which was taking from her the last remnants of courage and of hope. They were such sad, hopeless, beautiful blue eyes. It was such a sad, sweet face.

She walked on in a sort of trance-like indifference to her surroundings. She did not hear the sparrows' shrill chatter in that quiet, unfrequented street, but she did hear the leaves rustle, and she felt gratefully the cool, salt breath of the sea, and so walking on she came face to face with her brother-in-law, Richard Mackirby.

He was walking briskly along and so absorbed in his own thoughts that he would have passed her if she had not called him by

name. He turned and walked along beside her.

"So," she said, "you are the man Malchias, the palmist, the mind-reader, sent me to meet?"

"Malchias, the mind-reader!" he said. "I don't understand?"

"Why," she said, "haven't you heard of Malchias, Richard? The mysterious man from the unknown who reads such wonderful things concerning the individual, from the individual's hand? They talked so much about him at the luncheon that I was attending to-day that I decided to go and hear what he would say to me," then she laughed, in mirthless fashion, and added: "The man evidently believes in himself. He was really afraid to tell me what he fancied he saw in the to-come of my life page. He offered to return me my fee, he tried to make me believe that my hand was a blank to him, but I knew better, and I told him so, and finally he permitted himself to say that I was soon to be in great peril. He said if I had a friend who was prominently forceful, I must communicate what he had said to me at once to him. He told me

to send to this friend a ring which I wear about my neck. He told me to send home the carriage, and to walk through Rosebush Street, and a trusty messenger would meet me who would take this ring to my friend. And here you are, and here is the ring."

There was something uncanny in her great quiet eyes, in her immovable smile, in her lack of interest, in her unemotional voice. She seemed so altogether far off.

"Bonnie," said Richard Mackirby, gently, as he took the ring from her hands, "I hope you are not allowing yourself to be made the victim of a clever trickster's art." He said this, but he did not believe what he uttered; on the contrary, he felt that the man was a prophet, and that every word of his advice was precious to foil some unknown and cruel purpose soon to be brought to bear upon the woman beside him. "But, Bonnie, I am your friend, and whatever you bid me do with this ring, I will do it."

"Then listen," she said. "Take the first train to London and go directly to Lord Blankshire's house. I saw by the morning paper that he was in town. Take this card of mine, and send it in with yours, and he

will see you. Give him the ring. Tell him all that Malchias said to me about my needing a strong friendship in the future, in the near future.

"You see the ring is Masonic. You will perhaps for this reason be even more zealous to be helpful to me; and please tell him how the children love you, and how fond you are of them. Tell him that I can't think what can be going to happen to me. I seem to be well and strong, but of course dreadful accidents come when one least expects them. And so I do not dare to ignore this advice on the children's account. That is all that there is to say to my lord. But Richard," she laid her hand on his arm, "I know that you are so truly my friend that you will not ask me to explain anything. I had rather whatever his lordship wishes you to know concerning his interest in me should come from him to you. And now our road parts, and I must go on alone, for we are nearing home, and it is best that we should not be seen together. I should like to shake hands with you, Dick, if you don't mind, and I should like to ask you, if I am going to be

killed soon by some accident, that you will not let the babies forget me."

She did not wait for his answer. She turned and went back a few steps to a cross street, and left him standing there, looking after her.

CHAPTER XXI.

“Glen Hall.

“My own dear Nell:

“I suppose you have all seen accounts in the Chicago papers of the sensational poisoning case that is stirring us up over here. It would, I think, be a matter of interest to me if the accused was an English woman, but she is something more; she is an American, and oh, Nell, Nell! why didn't I pursue that misguided Vane until I made him tell the wife about that poison! For the man who is supposed to have been poisoned by arsenic is the man Mr. Vane told us about at the dinner party, and the woman who is accused of doing it is his wife.

“Of course, the poor woman—her name is Mrs. Mackirby—will get free. All the papers but one say that she will, for to begin with everybody who knew this Mr. Mackirby intimately knew that he was a confirmed arsenic-eater. The papers are full of letters, written by well-known and highly respect-

able people, saying that they are willing under oath to attest to this fact.

“It seems that in the last part of April this Mr. Mackirby went down to his office as usual, and while there was taken suddenly ill with nausea, but he dosed himself up so as to go off to some pleasure party in the afternoon. The next day this nausea returned with pain. He went home and his wife gave him a dose of mustard water, and as he still kept complaining, she sent for a doctor. Between Mrs. Mackirby’s mustard and the doctor’s treatment, the sufferer was relieved, and felt quite as well as usual for a week or more.

“But in early May he had another attack and his old physician was called in. Now, this doctor decided to be homeopathic in his treatment. He knew Mr. Mackirby ate arsenic, so he gave him arsenic to counteract the effects the habit had produced, and for some reason it didn’t work. It—one of the papers said, so I am safe in copying it—distressed the whole mucous membrane, and at Mrs. Mackirby’s request the doctor stopped giving the arsenic mixture and tried something else.

"Mrs. Mackirby never left Mr. Mackirby. Nobody else could do anything with him.

"So she was with him night and day, taking what snatches of sleep she could by lying down beside him when he was too exhausted by impatience and fretting to ask for anything more to be temporarily done for him.

"This constant and unremitting attendance began to tell upon the wife. She had several fainting turns and she looked like a ghost.

"So she was particularly grateful to Mr. Frederick Mackirby, her husband's brother, when he brought in a trained nurse from London, but the nurse when she had taken off her bonnet and put on her cap 'insisted,' in that authoritative manner which some of them, even in Chicago, attempt upon occasions, and this naturally annoyed a woman of Mrs. Mackirby's intelligence and refinement, and every hour the woman grew more and more impertinently indifferent to Mrs. Mackirby in her attitude, whenever Mrs. Mackirby offered a suggestion or made an effort to be helpful.

"In two days after the nurse's arrival her

ministrations were at an end. Mr. Mackirby died of what the attending physicians then seemed satisfied was heart failure.

“Those last two days had been awfully hard for the poor young wife. She was simply forbidden by the brother and the nurse to do anything for her husband. But he—the husband—refused to be taken care of by anybody but his wife. So they insisted that she remain in the room, a lay figure, to open her mouth and lift her hands or her feet at their bidding. Dear me! The whole scene makes me wild! How I should love to scratch them both!

“As I have said, the husband wanted to hold his wife’s hand; he wanted her to lay her head on the pillow beside him; he kept whispering to her with his lips quivering and tears in his eyes, and she would kiss his cheek and pat him gently, and say: ‘There, there, dear, don’t grieve; it is all right,’ and ‘I have quite forgotten all about it.’

“He wouldn’t take any medicine or any food from doctors, brother or nurse. They poured it out and handed it to the wife and she gave it to him; and if she left the room

for a moment, he repeated her name over and over and over again. It was 'Bonnie, Bonnie, Bonnie!' until she was back at the bedside.

"Do you think it is any wonder that after being without any regular sleep for seven nights and days, that when the final hour came, and he—the husband—was gone, that she fell senseless upon his breast? It is an awful hour, Nell. It takes more than human courage to meet it bravely. Talk about witnessing gladiatorial contests! To see a tiny baby die is as awful a sight. The spirit and the body wrestling for the mastery, the enslaved soul trying to tear itself from the cruel clay master and take its way home—these are sights which make one turn aside, sounds which shake the stoutest endurance. So when the death damps had ceased to pour, when the strong man's chest had ceased to strain and struggle, when the last effort was over, and the sting of death had been thrust, this wife swooned.

"Her mother-in-law and brother-in-law, the trained nurse that had been in the house two days, and Mrs. Mackirby's maid say that Mrs. Mackirby did not love her husband, and that for some time before her

husband's death she had been openly carrying on a flirtation with—oh, it is such a little world, Nell!—mother-in-law's nephew, whose name is Jack Thornely. I don't believe a word of it; for I have seen Mr. Thornely, and what is more I have talked with him! And you may take my word for it, that no one but his own mother could ever have loved him—and she didn't have the chance of trying; she died when he was born!

“And what business is it of those people whether Mrs. Mackirby loved her husband or not? It is said on excellent authority that he had been sapping her youth, her vitality, her pity and her patience for ten long years; that he was a drunkard and a libertine; that she found that he, a man of over forty, had married her, a girl of sixteen, for her money—money, not only to support him in luxury, but to keep his mother and brothers as well. She bore this man three children, thus mingling for all time his name and nature with hers; and so while probably she did not love him, in the sense of honoring or respecting him, there was the link of motherhood and fatherhood

between them, and it bound them close together. It was probably strong within them both in that parting hour. Have you never heard a white-haired woman say that when the partner of her life had breathed his last, that she lost all memory of the querulous, feeble man, and mourned for the love of her youth?

“Nell, dear, perhaps you can not understand what I mean, but mother and grandmother will, and you will, too, when he wins who now comes a-wooing, for there is something in marriage that brings a new love to light, a love that man and wife feel is immortal. It is often covered with a veil here, but when death’s hand tears the earthly fabric away, it comes back and dwells with the one that remains. And so may not this wife, kneeling beside her dying husband, have gone back into her past? May she not have believed that she held in her arms the man who wooed her? However that may be, when the spirit of William Mackirby returned to the God who gave it, the spirit of Bonnie Mackirby went, too; and she followed him on his way for thirty-six long hours, and when she awoke to time she

found herself a prisoner, guarded by officers of the law! She has been removed to jail. She has been remanded for trial. She will be free, of course; but just think of what this must mean to her—a delicate, gentle, innocent woman! Just think of it!

“Nan.”

CHAPTER XXII.

When young Mrs. Mackirby fell into the deep swoon beside her husband, Mr. Frederick Mackirby tenderly lifted her up and carried her in his arms from the room. He did not convey his unconscious burden to her own apartments, which were close at hand, but took her to a small room at the back of the house, and laid her on the bed.

It was a room no larger than a good-sized closet, and was only used as an overflow when the house was more than full. The little window looked out upon a blind wall, and even in the brightest days of summer it was cool and dark.

The nurse and Elizabeth, the maid, followed Mr. Frederick Mackirby, and as soon as he had left the room they proceeded to undress the unconscious woman, jerking her about with no tender hands, the maid in particular being viciously rough. The nurse, a big, powerfully built woman, paid

little heed to the maid or her actions, save to order her to do this or that. The maid was servile and fawning toward the nurse, and tried to win her into a conversation.

"Do you think, now, she could be taking on?" she said, jerking as she spoke at Mrs. Mackirby's sleeve.

"Taking on!" answered the nurse. "No; anyone but a fool or a blind person could see that she is perfectly unconscious! And why shouldn't she be? She has kept herself up on black coffee to my certain knowledge for the last two days. And during that time she has neither slept nor tasted food, and her husband did die hard! And he was a long time in getting through with it! She did a lot of quiet suffering. She is clear grit, that woman is!"

"Shall I take her rings off?" said Elizabeth.

"Yes," answered the nurse, "those are young Mr. Mackirby's orders, and wait, please, before you begin; I will count them, as I shall be held responsible for them."

Elizabeth shot an angry glance at the nurse, and mumbled something; but the nurse did not seem to see or hear her. She was taking off Mrs. Mackirby's shoes and

stockings. Elizabeth now pulled off the rings—all but the wedding ring; it still circled the finger from which it had never been removed since the bishop who had baptized and confirmed Mrs. Mackirby had entrusted this pledge to William Mackirby at the altar rail, instructing him to say, "With this ring I thee wed."

Elizabeth paused. "Would you mind taking this here one off?" she said. "It might bring me bad luck. I have often heard tell that it did."

The nurse looked at her contemptuously. "Step out of my way," she said, and she took the little frail white hand into her large work-strengthened one, and she tried to force the ring off. But it had wedged a place for itself, and the finger above where it circled had grown fuller. "Bring me some warm, strong suds," said the nurse. And the suds being brought, she held the finger in it until she was enabled to put the wedding ring, with the others, in the pocket of her apron. "Now," she said to Elizabeth, "bring a nightgown."

Elizabeth speedily returned, bearing upon her arm a coarsely made garment of

unbleached muslin, and on its front were four large porcelain buttons.

The nurse took the garment from Elizabeth's arm and surveyed it critically. It appealed to her sense of humor. She almost laughed. "Aren't you a trifle previous, Elizabeth?" she said. "This is your nightgown, and not Mrs. Mackirby's."

"Well, suppose it is my gown, and not hers," said Elizabeth, fiercely. "It's good enough for her where she is going, and it's all she'll get, if I can help it! Mr. Frederick and Madame Mackirby have promised me I should have her clothes, and I'm not going to waste any of those good things on her! Not much!"

The nurse was holding the helpless head in her strong arms, and putting the gown on. "Was she a severe mistress to you?" she said. "You seem to hate her so!"

"Severe!" snorted Elizabeth. "No, indeed! Trash like her! American trash! Doesn't know how to treat a servant. She was always giving me things and letting me off. But she was mean! Downright mean! She kept all her affairs to herself, and when Mr. Mackirby would be after strik-

ing her or anything, do you suppose she would take on, and cry, and talk to me about it? Bless me, no! You would have thought I was nobody. She never so much as mentioned it. And, as sure as you are born, for all that, we can swear that her and Mr. Jack Thornely was as thick as two thieves. I never read but one note he ever sent her, and when she got that she acted like a regular play actress. If I hadn't a-known from Mr. Frederick what sort she was, I'd have thought she was as innocent as a lamb!"

They had tucked Mrs. Mackirby into the straw-ticked little iron bed now, and they both stood looking at her.

"She may be the fiend that her brother-in-law swears to me that she is," said the nurse, "and she certainly did act queerly toward me. No woman who hadn't an object would have dictated to a trained nurse what to do and what not to do; but she is beautiful to look at, and even that guy of a gown of yours does not make her look anything but a lady. I suppose we had better straighten up the room, and take her clothes out and lock the door."

"But," said Elizabeth, when the tidying had been completed, "suppose she should wake up? Mr. Frederick says it's a God's blessing that she is off in this faint."

"I don't think she will wake up," said the nurse. But she took out her watch and counted the pulse. "Well, there is no knowing what she might do, and if Mr. Mackirby thinks it better that she shall stay asleep all night, I'll give her a hypodermic."

She did not take long to prepare the needle, nor to thrust it into the delicate arm. "Now," she said, "let your soul rest in quietness. She shan't wake until it is time. I will look out for that." Then she pulled down the window almost to a close, pulled down the shades, thereby shutting out what little air could find its way into the close room. "Come along," she said to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth looked back over her shoulder. "You don't think," she said, "that she will die? It would be very much against Mr. Frederick's wishes if she did!" The nurse vouchsafed no reply. She motioned to Elizabeth to pass out before her, and then she closed and locked the door.

CHAPTER XXIII.

During the thirty-six hours that elapsed after the death of William Mackirby, Mr. Frederick Mackirby, with the assistance of Elizabeth and the nurse, arranged everything in and about the apartments of his late brother and his late brother's wife to produce the effect he desired.

Arsenic was stored away in one of Mrs. Mackirby's hat boxes, arsenic was put into a jewel case bearing the name of an American firm, arsenic was sprinkled into jugs and dishes containing food particles, some arsenic was dropped into a half-used bottle of meat extract. There was arsenic put on the linen closet shelf, and arsenic put into an empty trunk, a trunk with Mrs. Mackirby's maiden name printed upon it. There were arsenic pills put in a washstand drawer, and finally a saucer of steeping fly-paper conspicuously placed on the mantelshelf. Then Frederick Mackirby retired to the library, where his mother had installed

herself, and sent a messenger for the police.

He received the man at once upon his arrival. His mother, Madame Mackirby, was weeping piteously; Richard, pale and distressed, was standing beside her chair. Frederick had a rumpled handkerchief in his hand. He had the appearance of one who has recently wept.

"I," he began slowly and with an effort, "I have, after long deliberation, decided that it is my duty to ask an inspection of my late brother's apartments. For several days before my dear brother's death, it was forcibly borne in upon me that his illness was most unnatural. I had many startling incidents brought to my attention; poisoning was suggested!

"My sister-in-law is a young woman, not thirty yet; my brother was much past fifty. She is an American, and she married my poor brother in America some ten years ago.

"She has to my certain knowledge been recklessly intimate with a man of good family. They have corresponded, for he has shown me, since my brother's death, her letters to him, and the tone of these letters,

while not absolutely criminating, show evidences of an unguarded, reckless attachment. I have proof that my sister-in-law visited this man at a public house, a small hotel!

"Besides this, I am ready to swear, the nurse who took care of my brother is ready to swear, and every servant in this house is ready to take oath of Mrs. Mackirby's suspicious and unwifely conduct, save one, the nurse of Mrs. Mackirby's children, who is blindly devoted to her mistress, who certainly was most kind to her."

Here Frederick buried his face in his handkerchief, and the officer turned to the younger brother. "And you, sir," he said, "have you anything to tell me?"

"No," answered Richard, quietly. "Nothing, but that I believe my brother's suspicions to be utterly absurd and without a vestige of foundation. My sister-in-law was a good, faithful wife, a loving and devoted mother. I was not here at the time of my brother's illness and death. Indeed, I am but just returned. I have nothing to say, but that as my sister-in-law's friend, I scorn this attitude taken by my brother as a shameless, baseless accusation."

"Mr. Mackirby," said the officer, addressing Frederick, "didn't the doctor give a certificate of natural death, and the cause?"

"The doctors," said Frederick, stifling a sob, "were inclined to think the death resulted from heart failure at first, but since then," another prolonged sob, "they have become convinced of their error. They insist that it is my duty to call you in."

"And what," said the officer, beginning to be impatient of Mr. Mackirby's prolonged sentimentalism, "what do they, the doctors, suspect?"

"I suspect," he said, "poison. The nurse I brought up from London told me that she felt quite sure my poor brother was dying from poison that was being administered to him in small doses by his wife."

"Very well," said the officer. "We will proceed at once to examine the room or rooms, but where is the widow? Where is young Mrs. Mackirby?"

Frederick looked unflinchingly into the officer's eyes as he said: "Mrs. Mackirby fell unconscious beside her husband when he died. But she recovered at once. I got her out into the entry, and she insisted upon

going into a little closet of a room at the hall's end. I tried to persuade her to go to her own apartment, but she cried out in terror: 'Not there! oh, not there!' and ever since she has kept herself in a dead condition with morphine, poor soul! poor soul!" he said, and shook his head.

He seemed so reluctant to tell anything concerning this evidently erring woman, it seemed so much a matter of duty, that the officer was drawn toward him. He thought how much more of a man he was than his brother.

So he laid his hand on Frederick's shoulder and said: "I wouldn't be sure that she is guilty, sir, until you get some real proof. Things often look black, and then the sky clears and there is nothing in it after all. Would it be asking too much of you to go with me?"

Frederick half rose, and then staggered back into his seat. "I cannot," he said, hoarsely. "No, it is impossible! I will call Elizabeth." He touched a bell, and Elizabeth appeared.

The officer looked at her interestedly; looked at her thin, pale face, her small,

uncertain colored, white-lashed eyes, her thin lips and her long, prong-like teeth. "Very well," he said, slowly. "Lead the way, Elizabeth."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Once in the hall, the chief motioned to two of his men who were standing there to follow him, and Elizabeth leading the way they were soon within the room where Mr. Mackirby had died.

"Now, boys," said the chief, briskly, "make a thorough search through this room, the next room and the bath-room. We are after poison. Find it! And while you are hunting, this young lady will sit down beside me and rest herself, for she looks worried and tired. Are you a housemaid, my dear?"

He and Elizabeth were quite alone now, the men having begun in Mrs. Mackirby's room, and the chief who had managed never to quite take his eyes off her face, thought that she looked for all the world like a child who was playing at "search and find." It seemed as though when the men, whom they could distinctly see through the wide communicating door, were in some places,

that Elizabeth was going to cry out, "You are hot!" and at other times, "You are cold!"

"Are you the housemaid?" he repeated again.

"No," she said, "I am not."

"What are you, then?" he asked.

"I don't see what business it is of yours," she said, sullenly.

"Well, I wouldn't get mad about it if I was you," he answered, pleasantly. "But all the same, my girl, it is my business, and I'll ask you the question again. Now, if you are not a housemaid, what are you?"

"Oh, if you must know, I'm young Mrs. Mackirby's maid. Now I hope you feel satisfied!"

"And why are you not with your mistress?"

"Didn't Mr. Frederick Mackirby say that she was asleep?"

"Oh, but suppose she should wake?"

"Let's suppose something that will happen; she's doped herself good."

The expression of the woman's face as she said this was so distinctly cruel that the officer felt a new interest in her, as a student feels when he discovers some new departure,

some new development in his particular course or line of thought. The officer, an advanced student in the study of human degeneracy, felt that close beside him was an excellent example of the stuff from which criminals are made. But he was well drilled in his craft; he was a clever detective, as the records of the "Yard" would show. So he nodded in good-comrade manner to the woman, he laughed a knowing laugh, and he said, appreciatively: "That's all right, my dear, let her sleep! Sleep's a good thing! Let her sleep!"

Just then one of the men came up. He was a young man, with a sharp, clear-cut face—a face that through some vigilance or alertness of expression made one think of a fox terrier.

"There is arsenic scattered everywhere," he said. "It is all done up in packages, and is labeled in clear, distinct handwriting. Besides the arsenic there is rat poison and cat poison and belladonna and aconite. There is enough of the stuff lying loosely around to kill a thousand men, let alone one!"

The chief rose. "I'll come and check it

off for you," he said. Then turning to Elizabeth, he added in a voice that she understood: "You sit still where you are, my dear, and don't you move until I tell you to." And then he went about jotting down the finds in a book, but he never was so intensely occupied as not to see the woman sitting upon the lounge.

But Elizabeth, being fully impressed that she was under no inspection at all, when the chief and his men were in the linen closet between the rooms, got up, took a small pitcher with some water in it that was standing on a table, went to the mantelshelf, and poured some of it into a saucer that contained a bit of dried fly-paper that had evidently had water on it before because there was a dried yellow-brown sediment on the china's surface. She was back in her place before it seemed possible that she had had time to accomplish the act. But she was not a second too soon, for the detective was beside her, and she paled and reddened in nervous terror at the thought of her narrow escape from detection, for he seemed all unconscious of the fact that she had moved an inch since he left her.

He sat there looking into vacancy and beating a devil's tattoo on the wooden edge that finished the sofa. Then the men came out of the closet and stood like a pair of mutes waiting further orders. The officer stopped beating the devil's tattoo.

"Just take another look around this room," he said. "Look on the table and the chiffonier top." "And," suggested the demure Elizabeth, "on the mantelshelf."

"Now, my dear," said the chief, gratefully, "I call that kind; for I should never have thought of the mantelshelf! Don't ever tell me that women folks couldn't make good detectives!"

Elizabeth bridled and looked indignant. "Dear me," she said, tartly, "I'm no detective, I'll have you understand! And I'd like to get through with sitting here, I would."

"Of course, you would," said the officer sympathetically, "for I know that such a loving, honest little woman as you are must be suffering tortures to be kept so long away from your poor, sick mistress. What is that on the shelf, Tom?"

"It is some fly-paper," said the fox terrier, bringing the saucer up to his chief; "but it has been soaked and dried up before, and it's just had some fresh water poured upon it."

"Oh, you must be mistaken about it's being freshly poured, Tommy," said the chief.

"Well, I ain't," answered the fox terrier. "For they spattered drops on the marble, and they are there yet!"

"Well, well!" said the chief, looking gravely perplexed. "Now, my dear, did anybody come into the room while I was out of it?"

"No," said Elizabeth, doggedly. "How could they? You locked the door, and you have got the keys."

"We don't need you any more now," said the chief, and he unlocked the door for her. Then when she had passed out, he locked it, and remained for a long time in closeted consultation with his assistants.

CHAPTER XXV

As the detective left the library, Frederick Mackirby raised his head and looked over to his brother.

"Why didn't you speak up and say something to that man?" he snarled. "You know as well as I do what sort of a woman William's wife is, and has been. You must realize that her course of conduct, her open and flagrant flirtation with Jack Thornely, her letters to him, which are now in my possession, breathing the most ardent and undying affection, and the fact that she met him by appointment in a hotel, and now William's peculiar and sudden taking-off, all point to one awful thought! A crime which I cannot bear to mention!"

"Well," said Dick, dryly, taking one of his late brother's cigars from a freshly opened box and lighting it. "Have you finished? Or is there more? If you have finished, I wish to say to you that I consider the attitude that you have taken not only

wickedly contemptible, but sublimely ridiculous," and as he said it he looked straight into Frederick's face, and Frederick, for some reason, changed his tune from his former snarl to a propitiating whine.

"If there is any time in life," he said, "when relatives should stand shoulder to shoulder, it is under such circumstances as these, when a family of position and prominence, a family who have always maintained an exclusive position, are forced to proclaim publicly a disgrace and a shame."

Richard still kept his blue gray eyes fixed upon his brother's face, but he did not open his mouth, save to relieve it of an over-abundance of smoke.

"Why don't you say something, Dick?" said his mother, peevishly. "Why didn't you tell the man that you knew Bonnie was a bold, bad, unprincipled woman?"

"Because, mother," he said, "I know her to be nothing of the kind. And it seems hardly the part of the prominent, exclusive and noble family that Frederick denominates us to fall to reviling the hand that has fed us bounteously for so many years!"

Then Madame Mackirby fell to weeping and to crying out: "Oh, my Willie! Oh, my boy! To think that you should die such a death! Oh, my Willie! my Willie!" and the old woman sobbed aloud, rocking herself to and fro. Richard turned from looking at his brother to looking at his mother.

"Don't cry any more, mother," he said. "It will do William no good, and whoever has told you that he died from anything but a natural cause has lied to you. I wish instead of feeling as you do, you would go upstairs to poor Bonnie, and rouse her up and make her dress, and come over to our house, where the little girls are. She needs their comforting arms about her neck, their comforting voices in her ears. Bonnie has been a good wife to your son, mother, and you would know this if you had not listened to the idle, vicious chatter of servants. Come, mother, let you and I go up to poor Bonnie."

"Go up to her! Go up to that vile creature!" The old lady rose with energy from her chair. "No!" she cried. "I will stay here, here in this room until I know that another murderess is in the hands of the

law! I want the joy of taking that news back to my son's children!"

Strangely enough, it was Frederick who spoke. "Mother," he said, "look at me and listen to me. I had rather Richard would have learned of the poor creature's evident guilt from the police discoveries and from the many witnesses, rather than from you or from me, because he is not with us, and is therefore against us. But it would be madness to let the children know a breath of this sad, sad condition! They must be kept in ignorance of anything concerning this matter. Even Dick will see the wisdom of this from a humanitarian standpoint. And when he comes to know the truth as we do, when her guilt is forced upon him, he will, with us, do all that he can to shelter the little lives which an adverse fate has committed to our care and guardianship. And remember, these children blindly worship their mother. And should we seem to be doing her an injustice, the two oldest children would be able to give us a great deal of trouble, for public opinion is a great thing, and I want the guardianship. This will enable us three to have each a princely

income for years, because, whether she is hung for her crime or sent into penal servitude for life, her entire means will be her children's. And that, with the large insurance that her money permitted William to carry, is no small matter, I can assure you! No. What we will all do, mother, is to say to the children that their mother is terribly ill at a hospital, and then, after the trial is over, that she is dead."

"But suppose," it was Dick who broke in, "suppose, even with all the proof you pretend to have, which is purely circumstantial, the case goes against you, and Bonnie is adjudged innocent, as, before God, I know her to be. What will your condition be then? Where will be your present support?"

Frederick smiled. "Bonnie will give us little or no trouble personally. Doctor Worthey, her physician, tells me that the shock of William's death, added to many other shocks, for we all know William led her a dog's life, will about complete her mental wreckage.

"I'm not in the least afraid of what Bonnie will do. That does not trouble me. But it

is the damned, infernal, meddling newspapers that we have to look out for! It is the cursed free press, that calls no man master, that dares to express its unvarnished opinion upon anything and everything, that cannot be kept out, that finds its way into the remotest parts of the earth, that has power to hold up the most secret thoughts of men and of nations! It is the newspapers that trouble me, for they form and generally settle public opinion!"

"You are quite right to fear them," said Dick, "and in view of the free press I have grown most hopeful for Bonnie. While you have been speaking it has occurred to me, if I am not incorrect, that when an Englishman who has married an American woman dies, the woman again becomes an American, and can claim the protection of the country in which she was born. And as our brother's wife was an American, she will elicit much sympathy from our cousins on the other side of the big pond.

"Give it up, Frederick! You will find this advice wise. You wish to believe this woman guilty, but you will never, never be able to prove it. But they are coming

back," said Dick, as he threw his cigar into the grate, "and I see by your pleased expression that they are bearing sheaves for your harvest with them."

CHAPTER XXVI.

The duties of the magisterial office had been accomplished. They were convened, performed and concluded, around the bed of the semi-unconscious woman, for she, while able to speak and answer questions, was still dazed through the mingled agency of weakness, nausea, bewilderment and morphine.

In this condition she was unresistingly lifted out of her bed, dressed in her plainest black gown, and carried down in the arms of an officer of the law to a carriage, and held up by two strange men in officer's uniform, in the carriage, and carried by one of these men into a cell in the jail.

Mr. Mackirby had made his final exit at a very convenient time for legal adjustment! One of the quarter sessions of the county was about to begin, and the case only waited its turn on the calendar. Never before in the history of the county in question had

such a concourse of people turned out to witness the arrival of the judges; never had the formal reception of them by the mayor and the escort been so impressive.

One of these judges, the ablest one of them all, or rather one who had been the ablest in times past, was going to try the young American woman for the murder of her husband.

It was noticeable to the newspaper reporters—who, by the way, when they are experts, have wonderful skill in feeling the pulse of the masses and diagnosing the mental sentiment of the people—that the masses were one and all in favor of the innocence of the American woman, but that the tiny so-called patrician minority were lying back in their luxurious ease and saying, “It was a shame that there was no law, no power, no force to trample on and out the incendiary socialistic and anarchistic utterances of the press regarding poor, dear, afflicted Madame Mackirby and her noble son, Frederick, when they had simply done a duty to society, a duty commendable and worthy of highest praise! That this vulgar uproar about the woman’s youth, her beauty, her wifely

and motherly devotion, her Christian charity and the rest would, of course, be looked for in the American papers, who made it a point to pedestal criminals awaiting trial. But in England, and Ireland, and Scotland, really the majority of the press had gone mad. They had caught the epidemic from the American papers as surely as one catches la grippe from his neighbor."

They said—this awesome, self-sufficient minority—that they were appalled—yea, appalled—to discover that the woman had secured great, powerful counsel; but then she was very rich, and of course the law would allow her to use her own money in her own defense. The law was merciful, but, thank God, and again thank God! said the minority, all the wisdom of her counsel will not be able to cover her sin. In America she would cheat justice, but she was in England! And a little time would prove to the press and to the rabble generally that the woman was to hang. They never said, did the aristocratic minority, "Mrs. Mackirby." She had lost her name with them, quite as much as though she had received her sentence; and it was imprisonment for

life, and she was "murderess number such and such a succession of units!"

They called her woman, and in so doing paid her unintentionally the highest tribute of honor the world, in giving crowns, can bestow. "Man was made from the dust of the earth, but woman from the image of God." So woman has ever been divine. With the ancients—the symbol of beauty, purity and wisdom, Minerva, all perfect, comes with her sheaf of wheat; Diana with her bended bow. "Woman, behold thy son," were the words uttered by our Christ, as he hung upon the cross.

The name the minority gave the prisoner in the Wilton jail was a royal one. It was being worn in all honor by the guardian spirit of the English nation; and it seemed fitting and appropriate to the prisoner, for her jailer said that she bore herself like a lady, and that she was kind and gentle and untroubled.

The humble, but unextinguishable majority said, and the newspapers said, "That even if Mrs. Mackirby had not secured an attorney to defend her, her case upon its hearing would be dismissed;" the majority

said the whole thing was a "cooked-up farce," a travesty on common sense. And so the days came and went, and trial time drew near.

CHAPTER XXVII.

And what of the prisoner? She had recovered sufficient strength by this to rise from her cot each day, and, with the assistance of the matron of the jail, to dress, and then sit in the rocking-chair which they had brought into her cell.

It was known to the world that she had never uttered one word of protest against her arrest and imprisonment. She had never asked a question; she had never made but one request, and that was for yarn and knitting-needles. And as she was watched and guarded night and day, this unusual and—what the minority called—“unnatural and suspicious” request was permitted her. The minority considered these needles and the yarn a grave breach of prison discipline. They suggested that it had a deep and serious significance. They said that it betokened partisan feeling on the part of the officials, and suggested that the whole

force of the jail should be removed, and with them the yarn and the needles, and that other and more loyal guardians should be appointed. But the majority and the press stood by the jailers. And it came to be that the silent prisoner knitted all day long; knit lengths upon lengths of narrow strips until the wool failed. Then she unraveled her work, and carefully wound the wool into balls to set the stitches to begin again.

Her lawyer came to her often. She received him kindly and was very gentle in her replies to his questions, but she answered the questions of the guard and the matron in the same fashion. She never failed to thank anybody for the simplest service rendered to her, and she never complained.

When the prison physician, who had orders to do everything that he could to make her physically ready to appear in court, paid her a visit, she answered all his questions concerning herself truthfully and intelligently. She was faithful in taking the medicine that he left her, often reminding the attendant that the mixture or powder was due. She tried to force herself to eat the food that was

brought to her, although it was an effort even to look at it.

To her lawyer she insisted that there was nothing to tell; that, of course, she did not know where the arsenic came from, but Mr. Mackirby could tell him—Mr. Mackirby, her husband.

But Mr. Mackirby was dead! Her brother-in-law, Frederick Mackirby, and her mother-in-law, Madame Mackirby, had had her arrested for poisoning her husband with some of this arsenic. They were going to bring witnesses to prove where she bought it all and how she used it. Her former maid, Elizabeth Pith, had already told a great many criminating things, and had more to relate at the trial. She remembered Elizabeth Pith, didn't she?

She laid her knitting down and put her hands to her temples. "I am trying to think!" she would say, looking at him piteously. "I want to think of a great many things, but everything is so confused in these days that I even forget sometimes my own name. I have to say the alphabet—I am so glad I don't forget that!—until I come to the first letter, and then I have to go back

and find the second in the same way, and then suddenly it comes to me! And just wait a minute! Just a minute!" and he would wait and wait. Finally she would take her hands from her head, take her eyes from his face, take up the knitting that she had laid upon her lap, and go on again; and he knew that she had quite forgotten his question and his presence.

Then came his one rousing question. He had learned much about this woman's nature—this poor, desolate cast-away, for whose sake, aye, not whose money, he was making ready for the most masterly legal encounter he had ever engaged in. "How," he would say, "are the children?"

Then her eyes would brighten and her grave lips would smile, and a dimple would come into her pale cheek. "The children were never so dear and sweet as they are now," she would say. "They never leave me day nor night. They are always with their mother. It is such a blessing to be a mother! God has given us earth's most precious gift in our children, for whatever should we do, when trouble and sorrow come to us, without them?"

“And what has little Bonnie been saying to you?” he would ask. Then a wonderful brooding tenderness would come into the wan face. “Oh, she is so sweet!” she would say. “She doesn’t say much. She just rests me and comforts me. She nestles, you know. I can feel her golden head on my breast, and she is always putting up her little pink fingers to my lips to be kissed. If God should take baby Bonnie away from me, my heart would break.”

“And what is Esther up to?” Then she would laugh. “Oh, Esther is such an odd child! She is always reciting poems to me, poems that I used to know when I was a little girl. And I didn’t suppose she ever had been told about them. And she has such strange dreams! She told me to-day that her great-grandfather came to her the other night and said: ‘Esther, remember that right is might. Tell your mother that this right will bring to her defense from an unseen host! Tell her that God is on her side.’ She said that her grandfather bent down to her and whispered, ‘There is a brotherhood among the sons of men whose number is countless. In the ranks of this

great and honorable order I and my father served faithfully and well on earth, and now that but one remains of our race, a frail, broken woman, to represent our name, the brotherhood will watch over your mother, little Esther, these living brother-workers of mine.' "

The lawyer looked keenly at her; the guard, all unconscious of his action, drew near; the lawyer and the guard looked at each other. What their thoughts were, what this woman's words meant to them individually, we cannot know. Perhaps they meant nothing at all; perhaps they thought them the wanderings of a clouded brain. But if it had any meaning to them, they knew it had none to the woman. She was an instrument handled by unseen powers, the words came floating through her lips like a thousand other vagrant spoken fancies that the imagined children brought to her.

But might not the Christ, the Savior of mankind, who raised Lazarus from the dead, who bade the little daughter of Jarius to "Arise and walk," who gave back to the widow of Nain her only son,—might not He,

the all-merciful, the all-compassionate, have bidden her dead to rise? She was one of God's children, consecrated through baptism, received into the body of Christ's church by the laying on of hands. She had lived honorably and uprightly in the sight of man. She had been accused, but not proven guilty. She was far from her country. She was orphaned, widowed, bereft of her children and friendless. Might it not be that in her need, through God's grace, the life principle of that which had been her father, and her father's father, and her father's father's father, was permitted the power to speak through her unconscious lips—to cry out to brothers still in the flesh, "Come and help us?"

Mrs. Mackirby had fallen back into her old attitude again. She was knitting. The lawyer bent down and said softly, "Good-by." "Good-by," she answered, not looking up. "She is with the children," said the lawyer to the guard. "She is always with the children," answered the guard to the lawyer, and the lawyer passed out into freedom.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The little Mackirby girls were looking out of the one window that the room assigned to them for a nursery in their grandmother's house afforded. It was raining heavily. There were dashes of hail against the pane and flashes of lightning running through the leaden sky, and great peals of echoing thunder.

Little Bonnie was in her oldest sister's arms; Marion was rocking her. "I want mother," she said fretfully. "Get mother, Marion."

"Hush, dear," said Marion. "You know what Uncle Frederick and grandmother tell you every day, that our poor dear mother is very ill!"

"I don't see why we can't go and see her if she is," said Esther, who was close at hand. "They let us run in and out of father's room all the time, and he was so sick that he died! And they didn't take him to any hospital!"

"I know it," said Marion, gravely. "I often think about that, too; and the more I think the more I get confused, for it doesn't seem a bit like mother not to want us to come to her, and it's so long!"

"I do wish she would hurry up and get well!" said Esther. "I hate grandmother's house. It smells so of the cooking, and I hate this nursery, and I hate, oh I hate our bedroom! The paper on the wall has grinning faces all over it, faces of tigers and witches! Grandmother may think they look like roses if she likes, but it's a witch paper, all the same!"

"Parks," said Marion, stopping in her rocking to address the nurse, who was at the other end of the room, putting away the clothes from the laundry, "Parks, do you know which hospital mother is at?"

"No, miss, I don't," said Parks, in the distance.

"Do you know what's the matter with mother, Parks?"

"Well, miss," said Parks, gravely, "I might give it to you in Latin, but there isn't any real out-an'-out English name for it; and I wouldn't be askin' questions. Ques-

tions is perplexin' to grown folks, let alone children. And, besides, if yer ma knew you was all worriting about her, it would make her worser. So just leave her with God and the blessed saints, the way I do, Miss Marion."

Parks was a thin, middle-aged woman, with a flat chest and a red nose. She had come to Mrs. Mackirby when Esther was born, and had been regent of the nursery ever since. People who interested themselves in Mrs. Mackirby's private affairs had often wondered why Mrs. Mackirby had selected such an unattractive nurse; but Mrs. Mackirby had kept Parks, and Parks had proved herself to be an invaluable servant. The children were always looked after and watched over, and in spite of her plain face they—the children—loved her dearly.

When Mr. Mackirby died and Mrs. Mackirby was removed to the jail, Frederick and his mother decided to dismiss Parks and install Elizabeth in the nursery, but Richard protested. Yet, in the face of this protest, the twain, when Richard was absent, summoned Parks and told her to go. Parks

was little, and her voice was as small as her body was short, and she gave the impression of meekness. But on this occasion she proved herself more than a match for the enemy.

"It shall be as you like, of course," said Parks, "but I think it would be better for you and Mr. Frederick, mem, to let me stay with the children.

"To begin with, my poor mistress in her prison cell is not the only person that the people are discussing in the Mackirby murder case! Folks are asking each other such questions as these, 'If there wasn't money to be taken care of until the children are old enough to be of age is it likely that Mr. Frederick would have made up his mind that his brother's wife was so wicked?' That is only one of the things they are askin'. Now, listen, mem, and you too, sir. I stands up for my mistress first, last and every time, and I think she would tell me that I was serving her best by staying with the children and caring for them as she would wish me to do. She will be coming out soon, for you can't prove anything against her; and then the

tables can be turned on you, for she is as innocent and pure-hearted as baby Bonnie upstairs.

“Now, as I’m going away I want to say that I hope the time will come when you will both feel sorry for what you have done, not that she won’t forgive you—she’s that gentle and forgiving that she could never bear malice toward even her worst enemy! Look at the way she always treated Mr. Mackirby! When he was feelin’ the want of pizen he would get awful riley; he would come into her room, and just try hard to get her to answer him back. He would say mean things to her, mem,—she the mother of his little girls—and when she would rouse up now and then to answer him back, Lord! what blows he would give her! In the face sometimes, but oftenest on her tender breast! Along at first she used to faint, and when it was over she would threaten to leave him; but that was all it amounted to, she always forgave him. I have never heard her, in all the years that I have been her servant, say a mean word against you, mem, or Mr. Frederick.

“Perhaps, mem, you never heard how she

came to take me. She was a visitor in a hospital where I was laid up. I had a man that abused me, but then my man wasn't no gentleman like Mr. Mackirby, and it was natural for him, when he was in drink, to be kinder free-like with his hands; but he had a real good heart, and when he was sober he used to cry because he had beat me, and he would ask me to forgive him. Well, mem, once he got on an awful spree, and he made out to nearly kill me, and then he killed hisself. Mrs. Mackirby, she heard my story, and she took a great interest in me, and she found out that I come of decent, honest folks; for she writ to the country-place I came from for my character, and she got a letter back from our priest. My name was McFadden before I was married, mem, to Parks.

"I had had children of my own and lost 'em, so she knew I would be good to hers, and my greatest desire is to continue to be. But if I can't care for her children, I can work for her, and I'm thinkin' I'll travel the kingdom over, telling all the newspaper folks the story I have told you, and many things besides, for I know much, mem, that

is neither to your or to Mr. Frederick's credit—indeed, I do!" And Parks had staid.

And now to go back to Marion Mackirby's question. Parks' answer did not seem to satisfy her. She was a clever child, and she knew that Parks was only trying to keep something from her. She rocked Bonnie softly, and her little face was full of grave thought. It was Esther, however, who broke the silence.

"Do you believe in dreams, Parks?" she said.

"Well," answered Parks, guardedly, "sometimes I do, and sometimes I don't; it all depends on what the dream is, miss."

"Well," said Esther, slowly, "I do believe in them, because mother comes to me so often in my dreams, and I wish that the next time I am with her I could die, and then I wouldn't wake up without her any more!" Esther was only eight years old. It was a piteous thing to see so young a breast bearing bravely such a burden of sorrow.

"But tell me about your dream last night, dear," said Parks, "do, pray."

"At first," said Esther, "after you had tucked me into the cot, I couldn't go to sleep; Marion did and Bonnie did. But I lay wide-awake; it was so warm out of doors and our bedroom is so little and hot! Oh, Parks, I wish we could go home!" Then she looked at her own and her sister's black dresses, and sighed. "We have no home," she said, slowly.

"Well, well, are you never coming to the dream, Miss Esther?" said Parks. "Let's have it; there's a love."

"Why, at last I fell asleep, and I dreamed that an old witch had stolen me from home, and had taken me to live with her in a castle that was ever and ever so far away. And I used to wait till the old witch fell sleep after her afternoon tea—just, you know, as grandmother does, and this witch looked exactly like grandmother, only she had a nose and eyes like Uncle Frederick—and when the witch was asleep, I would creep softly down the stairs and go into the garden. It was such a strange garden; all the flowers and trees and even the birds talked just as we do! And they were all so kind and friendly, and

felt so sorry for me because I was homesick for my mother. And——” The rain had ceased, and Parks, longing to give the room some fresh air, went to the window and opened it wide. It was still in the street below, and a boy’s shrill, clear, distinct voice was heard crying: “T’ree o’clock extra! Full particulars of the first day’s trial of Mrs. Bonnie Mackirby for the murder of her husband!”

“The boy is calling the paper, nurse,” said Bonnie, looking up and smiling. Unloosing Bonnie’s arms, Marion put her sister from her lap, and rose to her feet. Her face was very white, and her eyes had a new look in them. Marion’s childhood was dead; her womanhood had been born!

She opened the nursery door and went down the two flights of stairs, and gained the drawing-room. Her grandmother, with her bonnet on, was taking a cup of tea; her Uncles Frederick and Dick were both present. Not one of the three, to the days of their deaths, will ever forget what passed, will ever be able to drive the haunting presence of that child’s face from memory.

"Did you hear him?" she said. "Did you hear what that newsboy cried out just now as he passed under our window? Did you hear him say that my mother had killed my father? Who dared to say such a wicked, cruel thing! Who did it? Oh, grandmother, I am afraid it was you and Uncle Frederick, for I heard you talk unkindly about mother one day when I was behind the curtains, and you have both of you told Esther and me such wicked, wicked stories, and I will never believe you or love you any more, and Esther will not either!"

"I am going upstairs to get on my bonnet and cloak, and I am going straight to London to see the queen. She is such a good, kind woman that she will let me come into the palace, and tell her, I know; and then she will take me by the hand, and unlock the door of the room you have shut mother up in, and let us go home together!"

Neither Madame Mackirby nor Frederick moved nor spoke. The two hardened, cruel-hearted plotters were frightened as they had never been before. But Richard Mackirby rose and came forward, put his arm around the child, and laid her head upon his breast.

"Marion," he said, gently, "it is best that you should know the whole truth of this matter; it is best that you should hear me tell it now. Your grandmother and your Uncle Frederick believe that your father died from poison; that it was given him in his last illness by your mother. They had the house searched, and a great deal of poison was found in many places. They believe that your mother bought it and put it where it was found. They believe a great many other things, and have sworn to them, and so your mother is being tried for this crime now."

"Uncle Dick."

"What, dear?"

"Suppose that the people should think as grandmother and Uncle Frederick do? What would they do with my mother then? Why don't you tell me, Uncle Dick?"

"They would—they would——," Richard Mackirby broke down. He put his hands before his face and sobbed.

The old grandmother leaned forward in her chair. She looked like the witch in Esther's dream. "Do you want to know what will be done with your mother?" she

said. "Well, I will tell you. She will be hung for killing my boy."

Had the child heard? Did she understand?

She put her hand into her Uncle Richard's, and she stood looking at the old woman and the man beside her for perhaps a minute or more. It seemed an eternity to them. And then she said: "Grandmother, I think you and Uncle Frederick are the wickedest people in the whole world! And nothing you can ever do will make me love you! You have taken mother away from us, and now you tell me, her little girl, that you are going to kill her. Oh, mother, mother! come back to me! I want you, mother! come back to me!" The child swayed and would have fallen had not Richard caught her in his arms.

After much effort they restored her to consciousness, and then she begged that "Uncle Dick would carry her upstairs to the nursery."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Esther had followed Marion down the stairs to the drawing-room door, and there she remained and heard all that transpired in the preceding chapter.

Who can tell what it meant to this child of eight? At all events, it is known that when Marion fainted, Esther, with a firm resolve written on her little face, betook herself to the library. Once there, she proceeded to collect around her, upon the table, pen, ink, paper, envelope and stamps, such stamps as she knew her mother used when sending letters to America. She stuck two of these stamps upon the envelope, and then stood in deep thought for a minute. Then she took up the pen, and slowly and painstakingly she printed out this address:

“TO UNKLE SAM,
IN THE CARE OF
THE PRESEDUNT, WHO
LIVES IN WASHINGTON IN
AMERIKA.”

The envelope being addressed to her satisfaction, she blotted it, and then began her letter, and this was it:

"DEER UNKEL SAM.

"MY MOTHER IS A CRELASAN OF YOURS, AND MY GRANMOTHER AND MY UNKEL FREDRIK ARE GOING TO KILL HER. WILL YOU PLEAS COME AND GIT HER QUICK BEFOR SHE DISE. YOUR LOVING NICE

"ESTHER MACKIRBY."

Esther folded and sealed her letter, and then unnoticed and unheeded, for Marion's fainting fit was claiming the attention of the entire household, the child slipped out and dropped her letter into the postbox. Then she came in again, and mounted the stairs to the nursery.

Marion was lying on the sofa, and Parks was sitting beside her, with Bonnie in her arms. Esther came and knelt down close to Marion, and took one of Marion's hands in hers.

"Esther," said Marion, gently, "Parks says that you followed me downstairs.

Esther did you hear what grandmother told me?"

Esther nodded yes.

"Esther, dear," said Marion, with a real little mother tenderness threading her words, "you needn't be afraid of grandmother or Uncle Frederick because I won't let either of them touch you or Bonnie or Parks, and besides Uncle Dick is our friend; but, Esther, we must pray, pray all the time for mother. If we pray hard enough and long enough, perhaps we have still time to save her!"

"Well," said Esther, "I will, of course, pray every minute that I can make myself; but, Marion, I guess if God won't help mother, her Uncle Sam will!"

CHAPTER XXX.

“My own dear Nell:

“You know and I know that if I am a new woman, I am no crank; that I detest the sensational, and have only contempt for those of my sex who wish to make themselves vulgarly conspicuous. So when I tell you that I am actually attending all the sessions of the Mackirby trial, you and mother will kindly ascribe this performance to some earnest and honest and unselfish motive.

“Remember that this Mrs. Mackirby is an American woman; that she is on trial for her life, and that she has not a relation or friend near her. When I had thought the matter over pro and con, I went to father-in-law, and I laid the whole subject before him. I told him, however, that while I respected his opinion, I should abide by my own decision, and that I wanted him to make it possible for me to attend the trial and that I should also consider it a favor if he would corral family opinion and

confine its criticisms to the home circle—and bless him! he not only patted me, figuratively, on the back, and called me a ‘good fellow,’ but he fixed it so that the entire establishment have never uttered one bleat of protest.

“Father-in-law, in some way best known to himself, arranged, through the fact of my being a good stenographer, a place for me at the reporters’ table, and the espionage of a charming fossil, highly connected in the journalistic inner circle, who is doing the case ‘on his own hook,’ for what good and holy purpose I have not been able to discover, and I am supposed by the men and women round me to be in the same business.

“Nell, tell father that he will have to give in about fads being foolishness. Do you remember how he used to read us long lectures about taking bread out of the mouths of self-supporting women when you and I, for lack of something better to do, took a six-months’ course at a business college?—and then, for fun, have chosen ever since to write to each other in this charming cipher!

“Here I am, Nell, in a lovely, gray-

sprinkled wig, that makes me look for all the world as pretty and unnatural as the child in Southey's poem! I suppose the people about me think that I am an intelligent widow, for I have adopted plain black and unsmilingness, and my eye-glasses—I had them made to order for the purpose—complete my entire disguise. I'm not going to describe the court-room and the detail. Detail and descriptions of scenery always bore me dreadfully. The court-room and court manners are vastly different from ours. Everything is far more dignified.

“Our judge, the one that is trying Mrs. Mackirby, is a splendid old wreck. His manners are the only thing left of what must have been a fine and forceful personality. Now he is, in a perfectly gentlemanly way, restless, vacillating and childishly petulant. The idea has struck me several times since the trial began that the judge and the prisoner were both more appropriate subjects for a mad-house than a court-room. I hope I shall be able to show you why as I go on.

“Next comes the jury. They are less than mediocre. Where they found twelve such

miserable looking specimens I can't imagine! They make up for their lack of intelligence in bodily ponderosity. They look for all the world like twelve well-fed oxen, who are chewing the cud, not of sweet, but of bitter fancy. A very chatty newspaper man who sits next to me—I am the rose between him and Papa Methusaleh—tells me that these jurors are allowed to go to the theatre, that they have conversed with the public, and are seen perusing the daily papers! Which, if true, is certainly most reprehensible!

“And the prisoner! Oh, Nell, Nell! When I look at her the shame, the cruelty of it all, makes me want to bury my head in my arms on the table before me and cry. She is all but carried in to her place every day, and when the man has put her into her chair, she never fails to look up and thank him. Then she leans back, folds her hands in her lap, and looks straight before her. She must have been more than a pretty woman once; her face is very sweet now, but it is colorless, and her eyes have such a far-off look. She has a great lawyer, and several lesser, although most brilliant, legal

lights to defend her, and it really did seem before and it does seem now, as though there was no case at all.

“The real battle began when the crown called Mrs. Mackirby’s maid, Elizabeth. She was a mean, contemptible-looking creature! and I noticed that while she swore her mistress’ character away, she never once let her glance stray toward the prisoner. She told a great many unbelievable things, and she was so overflowing in personal venom and spite, so anxious to send her mistress to the gallows, that the crown, seeing it, had the good sense to make quick work of her.

The defense handled Elizabeth without gloves, and made a pitiable spectacle of her, and when she got down and out of the case she left the impression upon all intelligent minds, I am sure, that she was a paid spy in the past, a disgrace to her sex in the present.

“Then came the brother. I can’t bring myself to talk about that man! I believe—I actually believe, Nell—that when he dies, the devil, really, will give him a basketful of brimstone and matches and send him off to make a little one of his own! I can’t write

about him! The blackest ink is white in comparison to the darkness of that man's sin-stained soul. If there was a 'Judas society,' he would be the present president of it.

"Then the poor old mother was lifted up. But she proved unintelligible, for when she saw Mrs. Mackirby she went off in as wild a tangent as 'Mr. F.'s aunt' ever did at sight of 'Arthur Clennam!' So they had to give her up as an impossible witness.

"Then came the doctors, the chemists and the toxicologists! And we laid Mr. Mackirby's internal organization out flat, and put our (figurative) fingers on him generally. We discussed dyspepsia, chronic and the other kind; we dipped deeply into headaches and pains in the stomach, and numbness, and foul tongues! We lived in an atmosphere of badly smelling bottles—bottles of all sizes and descriptions, from the Mackirby residence and the Mackirby office. One of the jurymen at this period evinced a lively interest; he had intense color and breathed hard. I think he was in the junk business, and that naturally his mental feet were upon his native heath! Mr. Mac-

kirby must have literally bathed himself in 'skeery' patent medicines. He must have gone on regular drug sprees!

"And during all this time, if you please, nobody for the crown said anything about Mrs. Mackirby, and in the cross-examination by the defense, they said less; but they did say to both sides that Mr. Mackirby had boasted to them individually of eating arsenic.

"Did the doctors think, while they were attending Mr. Mackirby in his last illness, that the sick man's manner indicated that he suspected that his wife was trying to poison him?

"Oh, no! Nothing in Mr. Mackirby's manner suggested such a condition of mind to them; indeed, he seemed to place all confidence in his wife. He was very restless, very unhappy when she was absent, and was not content until she returned to him, and they talked much together in low tones.

"Did they think, from anything they had observed during Mr. Mackirby's illness, that Mrs. Mackirby knew anything about poisons? Did she ever speak of having read

books on the subject, or had she made any intelligent remarks in this connection?

"Oh, no! Oh, never!

"Now, about the mysterious fly-paper, with which her brother-in-law felt sure Mrs. Mackirby had killed her husband. Could the fiber of the fly-paper be gotten rid of without careful filtering, and straining?

"No. Certainly not.

"Would an inexperienced young woman be likely to think of this straining and filtering? (Crown objected.)

"Now, to the best of these doctors' knowledge and belief, was any fiber found in any of the arsenic discovered in the body?

"No.

"How many of the bottles out of the hundred and more collected at the house had been found to contain arsenic?

"One.

"Was there any trace of filtered fly-paper solution in this bottle?

"No.

"One particular doctor had prescribed a dietary for his patient, had he not?

"Yes. It was prepared in the kitchen by

the cook, from the doctor's own recipe, was it not?

"Yes; and this was taken down to the office by a footman, after the cook had sealed it up.

"The cook swore to making the food and tying it up; footman to taking it from cook's hands directly to the office.

"A chemist was called who had sworn to having found arsenic in food particles in a jug at the office. Chemist rather rattled, and not so sure about particles to the defense as he was when the crown had him.

"Another doctor called. This was a young man that knew everything! He was one of the crown's star witnesses. He swore that he believed that Mr. Mackirby had taken his fatal dose of arsenic on the third 'at the office.' As I have said, he was a very wise young person. He spoke pointedly to the jury, and talked with charming irrelevance about sherry. He might have said 'damn!' just as well, he was so fierce over it! But he grew rocky when the defense got him, and he changed from sherry to morphia, which really seemed to have the effect of putting the jury to sleep.

The junk man absolutely snored, and had to be waked up.

“A chemist—another one—was called. Mrs. Mackirby had bought a package of fly-paper from him, likewise elderflower and glycerine, and some other herbs and things. She told him that she had bruised her face, and explained how she was going to prepare the lotion. He thought it a very sensible prescription; she had had it sent home in an unsealed package, and the boy had delivered the package to Mrs. Mackirby’s footman.

“Then came the nurse! Her testimony made me tired. She was one of those awful stone women that you hate as a matter of principle. She implied so much to the crown, and the defense sifted it down to this:

“Did any of the physicians suggest to her (the nurse) in any way, or at any time, before Mr. Mackirby’s death, that they suspected Mrs. Mackirby was trying to poison her sick husband?

“No.

“Had they at any time cautioned her

against permitting Mrs. Mackirby to feed or give medicine to her husband?

"No.

"Had anyone cautioned her?

"Yes.

"Who? (Objected to by the crown; overruled by the judge.)

"Mr. Frederick Mackirby. She had said to the crown that Mr. Mackirby knew that his wife was poisoning him.

"How did she know it?

"Because he (Mr. Mackirby) said: 'Now, Bonnie, be sure not to give me the wrong medicine.'

"Who was pouring out the medicine at this time?

"She (the nurse) was.

"Why did she (the nurse) pour the medicine out and then give it to Mrs. Mackirby to give her husband?

"Oh, well, because Mr. Mackirby was stubborn; he wouldn't take anything from anybody but Mrs. Mackirby.

"Then if any wrong medicine had been administered it would have been the nurse who would have made the mistake, would it not?

“Yes, she supposed it would.

“Then is it not more than probable that Mr. Mackirby, knowing that the nurse was pouring out the medicines, might have said: ‘Bonnie, be sure the nurse does not give me the wrong medicine?’

“The nurse looked huffy, and said she was sure she didn’t know what he meant, or didn’t mean, which answer was so unsatisfactory to the crown that they had quite a lengthy sputter over it, and came out second best with our side.

“A farce, Nell! A piteous farce! but the defense had not finished with the nurse.

“What other reason had she for thinking Mr. Mackirby was being poisoned by Mrs. Mackirby?

“Oh because when he was delirious he said, ‘Oh, Bonnie, how could you do it!’ over and over again.

“Do what?

“The nurse did not know what, but supposed ‘poison me.’

“The nurse had just said Mr. Mackirby was delirious. Was she (the nurse) in the habit of regarding the remarks of her delirious patients as intelligent conversation?

"No. She didn't know as she was.

"She (the nurse) had administered meat juice to Mr. Mackirby. Did she give Mr. Mackirby the meat juice at Mrs. Mackirby's request?

"No. Mrs. Mackirby insisted that Mr. Mackirby was too weak to take anything so strong into his stomach. She (Mrs. Mackirby) forbade the nurse to give it to him.

"But the nurse gave it to Mr. Mackirby, did she not?

"Yes.

"With what result?

"Mr. Mackirby vomited and had violent pain.

"Did anything else happen to the meat juice?

"Oh, yes. Mrs. Mackirby was very angry about it. She got up and took it away from the table by the bedside and carried it off into her room.

"Did she not bring it back and put it where she found it?

"Yes.

"How long was she gone?

"The nurse did not know.

"Did she not come directly back?

"Yes.

"Did the nurse mention to Mr. Frederick Mackirby or to the doctors her suspicions that the meat juice had been tampered with by Mrs. Mackirby before Mr. Mackirby's death?

"No. Not until after his death.

"Then the handwriting on the packages of arsenic were brought and specimens of Mrs. Mackirby's handwriting too. But as nobody had come forward to prove that Mrs. Mackirby had bought a grain of poison; as the police had not been able to trace a grain to her purchase or procurement, the fact that the handwriting on the packages did look like her handwriting did not seem to be a powerful argument pointing to her guilt.

"Mr. Frederick Mackirby looked, all the time this writing was on exhibition, as though he were the artistic arranger of the affair, and he seemed rather ashamed of his work, not because it was so bad, but because it wasn't up to what he had intended it to be.

"Then came the analysis. And it was

proved by specialists for the crown that although the man was a confirmed arsenic-eater, that his wife had killed him with an infinitesimal dose. It was proved by specialists for the defense, that the man, being a confirmed arsenic-eater, and being deprived of the drug in his last illness, he died from lack of poison! How more than stupid of Mr. Frederick Mackirby! He should have accused his sister-in-law of wickedly keeping arsenic from his brother.

“And I must not forget to tell you something awfully funny. The crown accounted for Mrs. Mackirby's allowing so much arsenic to be about by saying that ‘She was an incautious and artful woman!’ I wonder if these two words were ever harnessed together before? ‘Incautious and artful!’ Poor soul! What an unhappy combination! It makes one feel weak-minded to contemplate its possibility! They also said, ‘She was cunning and artful to a degree,’ and added in the same breath, that she exhibited an extraordinary want of caution by buying the fly-paper (to kill her husband with) openly, and leaving it steeping on saucers under people's noses!

“Of course this account would be maddening to a man to read, but I am writing to mother and grandmother and you; and if you hear father grunt or sniff, or if he begins to argue, just stop short and don’t read him another word. Mother never did sit on father enough, and it has made us girls no end of trouble!

“Well, I want to talk about one of the post-mortem-star witnesses. He said, in substance, for the crown, that mineral substances have a tendency to preserve the human body; that when Mr. Mackirby died the weather was cool, and then he swore that within forty-eight hours after Mr. William Mackirby’s death his body began to decompose! He said about one-tenth of a grain of arsenic was discovered in the body; he swore that two grains was the smallest fatal dose recorded. He said that a man who had been in the habit of eating arsenic for years could not be fatally affected by even an ordinary killing dose.

“It was no use, Nell, not a bit of use! The poison theory was knocked higher than Gilroy’s kite! And the crown knew it; so they brought in a lot of love-letters supposed

to have been written by Mrs. Mackirby to her lover—mother-in-law's nephew.

“They were the sort of love-letters one finds in the ‘Model Letterwriter.’ A great deal of ‘love’ and ‘dove’ and ‘darling.’ I don’t believe that she ever wrote them. If she swore that she had, I wouldn’t believe her, for I think she has lost her mind! But what these letters were brought into the case for is a question. There is not the slightest allusion in them to getting rid of Mr. Mackirby by poison, nor about buying poison nor soaking fly-paper. Mrs. Mackirby is not at the bar of justice for disloyalty to her husband, but for murdering him. If all the married women who have written love-letters to men who were not their husbands were to be ferreted out and sent to jail, and then tried for murder, I am afraid that the wailing and gnashing of teeth would be more general than proper. And I am also sure that the prison accommodations in the United Kingdom would be uncomfortably filled.

“The crown contented itself with the love-letters and a hotel porter. This porter swore to having seen Mrs. Mackirby and a

man in his hotel, but he was evidently a stupid fellow and had gotten his lesson so badly that he was made very little of individually, although he was used in the summing-up as an oratorical flight.

“Mother-in-law’s nephew did not appear. They hinted at him—the crown did, I mean—and suggested him and generally coquetted with him, but they never produced him. In fact, he couldn’t have done anything to help the crown hang my countrywoman, so they let him go.

“The family physician of the Mackirbys has sworn that he has known for years that Mr. Mackirby ate arsenic and drank arsenic; that fully realizing this state of things in Mr. Mackirby’s last illness, he gave him arsenic as a counteractant. He swore that Mrs. Mackirby had never to his knowledge or belief done anything for her husband that was not for his benefit. He swore he never suspected, never dreamed of such a thing as Mrs. Mackirby’s poisoning her husband until Mr. Mackirby’s brother, Mr. Frederick Mackirby, and the trained nurse told him of some suspicions they had. He swore he was present at the post-mortem examination,

and he said the stomach contained only a very small portion of arsenic, not possibly a fatal dose; and he thought the arsenic found was resultant from his (the physician's) prescribing.

"Then more witnesses were called—doctors, chemists, servants and friends of the late Mr. Mackirby—who swore to selling him poisonous medicines, to giving him poison, to seeing him eat and drink poison.

"There were people who came forward to give many proofs of Mrs. Mackirby's goodness, kindness, gentleness and generosity; to tell of her faithful wifeness, her tender motherhood, and then the defense rested.

"The crown did not shake in the least the testimony of Mrs. Mackirby's witnesses in their cross-examination.

"This has all been written, Nell, on various days and at various times. It is all mixed up as to tenses and parts of speech, and it will probably be worse than ever now, for the trial is drawing near its close. I have left out all the detail and probably much that is important besides; but home folk are apt to be gentle critics. I don't

mean to say much about the summing-up on either side.

“The crown, of course, was eloquent in its denunciation of the prisoner, but to anyone with a grain of humor it was a roaring farce to see a great, big, clear-headed, free man stand up there and call the pale, semi-unconscious little woman prisoner a modern Borgia, steeped to the throat in blood! To hear him appeal to those pigs in pantaloons and coats, ‘to look at the prisoner, to mark her cruel smile, the brazen effrontery of her stare, her hardened, vicious expression!’ It is such a gentle face, Nell; it would look like a benediction under a nun’s cap! It was grimly funny to hear this man ask the junk-dealer and his eleven brethren to ‘mark with shame how brazenly she listened to the name of “scarlet woman” when applied to her;’ also that ‘black were the thoughts of Bonnie Mackirby, and dark as hell the soul of Bonnie Mackirby!’

“I thought of Hawthorne’s ‘Hester Prynne,’ as she stood high above her stern, cruel Puritan persecutors with the scarlet letter upon her breast. If the woman in the prisoner’s chair has ever been untrue to

her marriage-vow, which she has not—it has been because the man who had married her had driven her out of his heart, had left her outcast and desolate! It was because numbed and chilled and frightened by the blackness into which she was cast some door suddenly opened and a kindly voice offered her shelter and warmth and light. Is that sin? If it is, the good, good God who called a human woman 'Mother' will have a welcome and a robe and a loving forgiveness for such a gentle prodigal daughter.

"Of course, the defense spoke as the defense always does, for the prisoner. But the dreadful charge! For oh, Nell! Nell! it has been given! It startled us all. The man must be mad! For he instructed his jury as to their verdict! Listen to this: 'It is essential,' he said, 'to this charge that the man died of poison, and the poison suggested is arsenic. And the question that you will have to consider is and must be the foundation of a judgment unfavorable to the prisoner; that is, your verdict must be that he died of arsenic.'

"I looked at the prisoner; not a muscle of

her face had moved. I looked at the jury; they looked like a lot of stupid schoolboys that had been given a hint as to the answer that would be required of them. And I knew through my womanly intuition what they would say. I looked at the little company of bloodhounds who were running this poor creature to her death. The brother-in-law could hardly keep from openly showing his joy! The other brother-in-law looked faint and distressed. He is a friend to this poor woman; he is known to have done everything in his power to serve her.

"The prisoner, as I have said, looked happy. She seemed quite unconscious of her present surroundings; she was wrapped about by a world of sweet and tender memories.

"I looked at the reporters about me; they seemed to me to be startled and unable to collect their thoughts.

"Then I looked at the people; and I took heart, I took courage. I found hope, for I saw a strong wave of disapprobation. The intelligent public were not with the judge who instructed his jury; they would not be with the jury who would follow blindly the

biased instructions of the judge. Abraham Lincoln knew whereof he spoke when he said, 'For the people, of the people, and by the people.' The people have always ruled; the people always will rule with the laws! Arbitrary triumph may endure for a night, but the people, God be praised! win the victory in all Time's mornings.

"Then, Nell, came the last act, the closing scene; for of course the jury came back with a verdict of guilty. The judge wrote out their copy for them; they went out, and came back, and announced their unanimous decision.

"And, Nell, the only one who did not expect this verdict was the judge. He looked startled and roused and astonished. For a few brief moments there was a force and an intelligence in his face that had never lighted it before in all the trial. But he rose, he held the black cap in his hands—the black cap which the judges in England always put over their wigs when they pass the death sentence. It is supposed to be a symbol of sorrow, this cornered 'sentence cap,' but

when I saw the old man raise his trembling hands to put it on, my first impulse was to turn away, my second to turn to her. The prisoner stood up, the courtroom was very still, and, Nell, as I raised my head and looked into her face I found her eyes fixed upon me, and somehow I felt as though my soul had gone out of my body—had gone and put its protecting arms around this sister soul, and was holding her close and was comforting her.

“The minority said afterward that the prisoner was so hardened, so indifferent to her fate, that she smiled as the judge pronounced sentence! The great majority drowned the shrill piping of the sleek-coated minority. They said ‘that the prisoner looked like one translated! That a look too fair to be earthly dwelt upon her quiet, gentle face.’ They said that as the judge gravely and impressively and euphoniously repeated the words, ‘Prisoner at the bar, you have heard the verdict pronounced by *your fellow-countrymen!* and if there is any just cause why sentence should not be pronounced upon you, you may now state it,’ that the prisoner

looked up quietly into the judge's face, and answered, 'I have nothing whatever to say, my lord, except that I am not guilty.'

"And then, Nell, came the doom. It was in substance that within one month Bonnie Mackirby should be taken to the gallows and hanged by the neck until she was dead, the judge kindly adding that he hoped 'God would have mercy on her soul.' Nell, I was very near her. I saw her lips move, and not only I, but the jailer and her lawyer caught the words, 'I thank you, my lord.'

"The British lion has ceased to play with the American mouse! The prisoner has been removed to a cell in the prison set apart for condemned criminals. She is permitted to see nobody, but her lawyer, and then it must be in the presence of the governor or some high jail official. There seems to be nothing more to do. The minority have won! The majority, in this instance, may howl themselves hoarse—as they are doing, God bless them!—but it will do no good.

"The papers are full of appeals, of protests, nay, of demands for the woman's release. There are letters printed from

noted scientists, noted lawyers, noted physicians, noted toxicologists, from clergymen and laymen, and from women of rank and of intellectual prominence, all asking for mercy in the name and for the sake of Justice.

* * * * *

“Days and more days have come and gone since I put aside my letter, too sick at heart to finish it or send it unfinished. The days are nearly accomplished in which Bonnie Mackirby is to make herself ready to die. And a strange thing has come to pass, the judge has been adjudged insane! He has been taken to a retreat. The physicians announce that the man has been suffering for a long time with softening of the brain. They say he is now upon the verge of imbecility. But do you suppose that the fact that the judge who tried Mrs. Mackirby was insane will stay the hand of the English law in its course? No! The gallows is being built, the rope tried. There is in English criminal law no possibility of rehearing a case when a verdict has been found by what is considered a properly con-

structed jury, upon an indictment which is correct in form. There is, Nell, no court of criminal appeals in England. There is nothing to do but to make appeals to the crown. And do you suppose they will listen to any of these appeals? Well, we shall see."

CHAPTER XXXI.

Closely watched, jealously guarded by warder and governor, Bonnie Mackirby sat in her prison cell, waiting for the day to dawn on which she should mount the scaffold and be strangled to death in a hangman's noose. They had taken her knitting-needles away, and so there was nothing for her to do but to sit with folded hands, to answer courteously all questions addressed to her, to obediently and cheerfully submit to all rules and regulations, to ask no favors, to send no messages, to make few requests.

One day she startled her guard by asking what he thought would be done with her body? He answered her question by asking why she wanted to know. Because, she said, if there was no legal reason to the contrary, she should like it cremated, and then perhaps her lawyer would be willing, for he seemed a kind man, to take the ashes (she had heard that they could be compressed into a small urn), and going out

with them on some tug, way out, so that the shore line would not be very distinct, that he could throw them into the Atlantic when the tide was going out. She said that she supposed it was a foolish fancy, but she had come to believe that a merciful wave would take those ashes and carry them swiftly back to the New England coast. So that something that had once been her would really be at home again, would touch the hem of Liberty's garments!

Again she asked him if it would be possible to have the execution at twilight. He asked her, as before, why she asked. And she said she should like to go away with the sun as it sank into the west.

Her lawyer asked her if she had any wishes with regard to her children and her property.

She shook her head sadly and replied: "I have no power to will or to do. I gave my youth and all that I possessed to England. I leave to her mercy my orphaned children, and all that once was called mine of this world's goods."

The lawyer asked if she knew that the

judge who had sentenced her had gone mad.

She seemed quite roused up by this. She said, oh, no, she had not heard! and it was very sad! and poor soul! She hoped it was really true, for if he were not mad, and he was only being locked up by some one who wanted his money or his children, it would be a terrible thing. She hoped they did not bring up his conduct in her case as a proof of his insanity. She would not like to be even the innocent means of bringing trouble upon him!

And so the days came and went, and into the cell there often came now the prison chaplain, to read and to pray, to admonish to confession and repentance; but the studied, professional, stereotyped voice robbed the words of any holy meaning. She listened, but she made no answer. She did not kneel or say amen, for this man had never been chosen by an all-merciful God to minister to those in prison. So the chaplain let fall his opinion that "Mrs. Mackirby was a hardened woman, a woman with a sinful soul, a heart of stone!" He said that she had no remorse for her terrible deed.

But in spite of the priestly verdict, heaven

was merciful and sent down a peace that passed the understanding of narrow human minds. She was comforted; she leaned on the angel that she could not see, and she felt no fear of what man should do to her. She knew that somewhere, somewhere in the beyond, there was a kingdom of glory, and in the thought of it she could smile and say "Amen!"

The time drew very near, and the jailers were more watchful and if possible more kindly. The lawyer came often and went away grief-stricken, and it had come to be the day before. The chaplain was wearisome in his attentions, and after he had gone the matron had a duty to perform. One of the prison rules had as yet been unfulfilled. They had until now spared the beautiful gold-glintoned chestnut hair. It had been unbraided and brushed out for the last time and the woman, with her shears in her hand, felt reluctant to fulfill her task. Mrs. Mackirby spoke.

"Do you suppose, matron," she said, "that the queen would mind if you saved three locks of this, that I will kiss, for my little

girls? I do not mean to give it to them now, but when they are older and better able to bear it all."

"I'll see if I can save some," said the matron, sobbing audibly.

"Don't cry," said Mrs. Mackirby, gently, "don't cry. It really isn't so bad as it seems, you know. I have done no wrong and I fear no evil."

The woman had not as yet touched the beautiful hair, and she threw down her shears upon the floor, and she came and knelt at Bonnie Mackirby's knees.

"Dear, dear lady," she said, "I have a baby girl up in heaven, and I'm always grieving about her because she seems so alone up there. She was such a mother child! Always clinging to my gown, always wanting me to take her in my arms! Would you mind looking for her? Her name is Annie Cummins; and would you mind cuddling her a wee bit for me?"

Bonnie Mackirby stooped down and kissed the tear-stained face. "I will find her," she said. "Yes, I will find her."

Just then there was a noise of opening doors in the corridor, and Dick Mackirby

and the lawyer appeared, and the governor was with them.

"Bonnie!" said Richard Mackirby. "Bonnie, my sister!" She looked at him, but said no word. "Bonnie, the Home Secretary has commuted the sentence of capital punishment to imprisonment for life. Thank God! thank God!"

In the silence that followed the prisoner spoke. She addressed the governor of the prison. "Do you think, sir," she said, "that the queen will let me have back my knitting?"

CHAPTER XXXII.

“My dear Nell:

“This is the last letter I shall write to you before we sail, or rather steam, for home, and between ourselves I can’t get back quick enough. And, oh, I want to stay in America for ever and ever, amen! Bettie can have her duke, and welcome. And as soon as I get into Sandy Hook, if I am not too seasick, I am going to read the riot act to Gerald. I’m going to tell him that I couldn’t respect a man who expected to live in a country, and yet who declined to become naturalized. And I’m going to keep at him from that time on until he does!

“Mind you, I think England is fair and delightful at her greatest and best, but she is dark and dreadful at her lowest and worst. I never witnessed such poverty! I never imagined such wealth and magnificence! I never saw broader philanthropy or more heavenly charity. I never could imagine such an enlightened nation as being able to

hold itself in such bondage to fixed out-of-date laws—which they say came in with Edward and will remain to cumber the English earth until doomsday.

“I like mother-in-law and I love father-in-law. If he had been an American, he would have been either President of the United States or a chief-justice. I haven’t yet quite settled which. I like the twins, as I do all well-preserved Dresden china. I like the brothers-in-law because they are high-minded, quiet-lived gentlemen. I like the sisters-in-law—a little. I am sure that I should like them less if I knew them better. And I like going home to my own dear Cook County best of all!

“Nell, please don’t laugh. But ever since that poor, innocent American woman was convicted of nothing at all, ever since her children were taken from her and she was cast into prison and barely escaped hanging, I have in spirit been a perfect Afferty Flint-witch. I have gone about with a figurative apron over my head! I have felt like Cain—as if every man’s hand was against me!

“I don’t think the queen approves of American women. I fancy she dislikes

seeing her titled earls and dukes supported by the money our fathers over the water have earned by honest toil. Of course, pedigree is all limited. Even kings and queens go back to humble beginnings. But then it is more agreeable to have sloop captains and fur peddlers and the like several hundred years off than only the day before yesterday.

“Well, I won’t trouble her majesty. I’ll turn the tables, and take instead of give! I’ll make a rousing Yankee of Gerald, see if I don’t!

“I suppose you are as thankful as I am that Mrs. Mackirby did not hang. But I do not think the woman who is sitting to-day in the solitude of her prison cell cares for the life they have given her. I know that she expressed no gratitude to England when it stayed its hand. I know that she seems to have neither past nor future, hope nor fear. When she can see to knit, she knows that the sun has risen; when the stitches in the needle cannot be counted, she knows that night has come.

“She has no name any more. She is called ‘murderess such a number,’ and this will be

her portion until a time when it shall please the All-Wise to call her to appear before that higher tribunal whose judgments are just and when there shall be awarded to Bonnie Mackirby a new name. Then she shall know why all this sorrow has been her portion, and she, with a higher wisdom, shall be glad to have been accounted worthy to suffer, as many saints have done through all the ages. Then she shall hear the voices of the angels, saying in their song of welcome, 'This is one who has come out of great tribulation!'

"Your Sister Nan."

THE END.

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